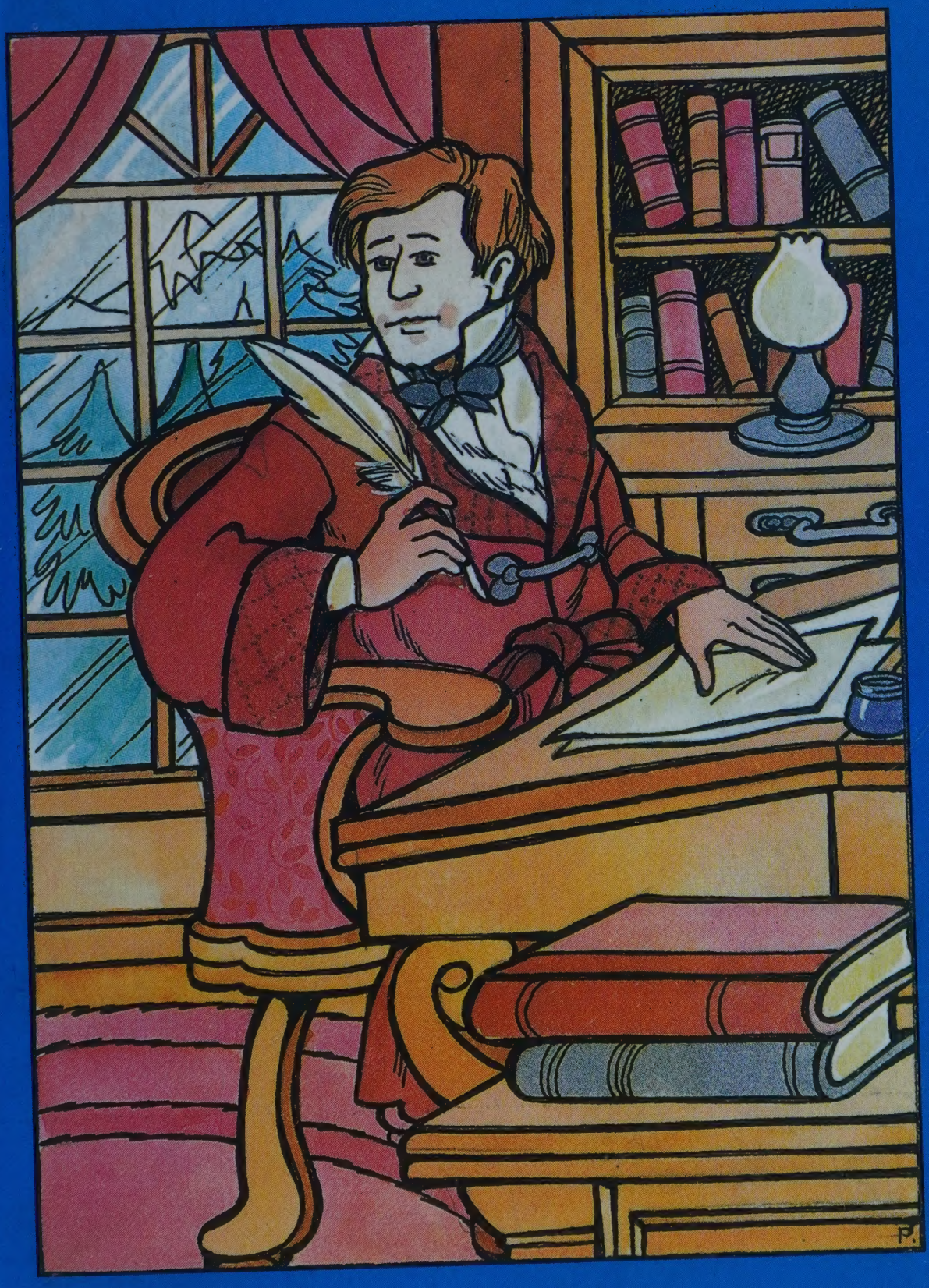

David Copperfield

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IT

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ORIENT LONGMAN EASY READERS

LEVEL 6

David Copperfield

Charles Dickens

Simplified and abridged by
K. RADHA

Edited by
DAVID HORSBURGH

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A word about readers and reading

Childhood is a time of enchantment as well as innocence. The child's eye transforms even mundane incidents and objects into the contours of a magical landscape; and perhaps the most potent magic of all is created by the miracle of *reading*. Once the child has discovered the intoxication of reading, life cannot remain the same; in fact, this may be the only relic of one's lost childhood that the adult is able to retain to the end, for it allows constant renewal.

It is sad that today media threaten one of the great comforts and privileges of a civilised society–the joy of reading a book. For nothing, no advance in technology, can quite replace the printed book. The child's imagination provides the script, helped by a little 'cueing' from an understanding writer, for the most fantastic as well as moving tales ever created. It is precisely because the book enables the child to unlock the treasure-chest of her or his own imagination that it scores so easily over a predominantly visual medium such as television.

The value of *extensive reading*, or *reading for pleasure*, has been widely recognised by language teachers, particularly teachers of English. It has been proved that children who come from homes where habits of reading are encouraged, develop faster, cognitively as well as linguistically, than children from homes where little reading is done. In fact, in a situation such as ours, where English is only a second language, with restricted use within the comunity, it is *reading* that can contribute most to successful language learning. Of the many millions of Indian children who spend painful years at school trying to master this language, relatively few succeed; and it can be demonstrated that those who do are the ones who have taught themselves to *read*—independently and widely, and with understanding and pleasure.

It may be said that, on the whole, the teaching of English does not adequately support or foster habits of extensive reading. Very many children read only the prescribed 'reader'. While the textbook, properly used, can be instrumental in the development of many essential *skills* of reading, there are other important skills which can be developed only through extensive (rather than intensive) reading, such as the skill of reading fast in order to acquire an overall understanding of a text. The language learner needs exposure to a wider variety of text types than can be provided through a single prescribed 'reader'. It is also important that learners should be trained to do *sustained* reading, which means reading through a *full-length* book (no matter how short) rather than a truncated excerpt.

The purpose in introducing extensive reading is to encourage children to read *widely* and *independently*, without having to depend on the teacher's help. Ideally, we should expect a child to read at least four to six books a year. The secret of success in reading is to develop the confidence that the learner *can* read independently. It is possible, however, that many children may not be able to or be willing at first to undertake the effort required and will require guidance by teachers. However, help should be offered, if at all, only as a form of *transition*, with the aim of gradually reducing the learner's dependence on the teacher.

In many schools in our country as well as abroad, every classroom has a *reading corner*, where selected children's books are attractively displayed. Several times a week, there is a *reading hour*, when children are free to pick up any book they like and read without interference. Some of the acronyms created for such activities are USSR (Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading) and DEAR (Drop Everything and Read). The benefits of such activities, which allow children to decide what they should be doing during a particular period, go beyond the development of reading skills.

This series, which has already gained wide acceptance over the years, is being re-issued in a more attractive format. Old favourites are being retained, but the range of titles is to be expanded to suit current interests and tastes. Texts have been carefully reviewed; it is intended that while these 'abridgments' should be faithful in spirit to the originals, children should be exposed to writing that is contemporary in style and idiom.

We hope that teachers, learners and their parents will find the new books even more useful and attractive than the ones they replace. The editors and publisher will be grateful for comments and suggestions. Meanwhile, to all young readers: *Happy Reading*!

Bikram K. Das
Series Editor

About the series

The *Orient Longman Easy Readers* aim to help children discover the joy of reading without feeling the constraints of a limited vocabulary. It is an encouraging experience for the child to be able to read what Michael West has called '...an enthralling approximation of the original'. The series tries to open up to the readers the world of old classics as well as modern writings, all within their grasp, as the language is simple and controlled.

The books are carefully graded into six levels so that students progress gradually through successive grades with increasing ranges of vocabulary. There are six levels in all beginning with 250-300 headwords in the first level to 3000–4500 head words in level six. In addition to the basic core vocabulary there are topic words, which along with difficult basic words are glossed on the pages in which they occur. The six levels are meant for the age groups five to seven years at level one, and go up to eleven to fourteen years at level six. Apart from lexical control, the books also use a structural grading system that is familiar to the readers. Even within each level, they are linguistically graded.

Although the books are simplified versions of original literary works, every effort has been made to preserve the author's individuality of style and opinion. The series hopes to bring to the readers a well-written story which will motivate them to go on reading and give them an opportunity to increase language awareness so that they will eventually be able to read and respond to the stylistics of unedited texts.

About the book

In the preface to *David Copperfield,* Dickens writes, '... I am a fond parent to every child of my fancy... But like many fond parents, I have in my heart of hearts a favourite child. And his name is David Copperfield.' And well he might, for *David Copperfield* (1850) has autobiographical elements in it. *David Copperfield* is not fictionalised autobiography but its nature reflects Dickens's thinking and writing over a period of years. The story of David Copperfield has many parallels in Dickens's own life, especially his childhood. He too, like David was sent to a blacking factory, when his father, John Dickens was imprisoned for debt. This period, as Dickens himself says, was the darkest in his life and the shame and resentment he felt, made his sufferings a secret he could not share with anyone. Thus, from a first-hand knowledge acquired under unhappy circumstances, Dickens gives his readers a glimpse of the unsavoury side of Victorian England—struggling poverty and debtor's prisons. There are many characters in the novel whom Dickens knew and many places in London that David visits were frequented by Dickens himself. The novel also gives us two unforgettable characters—Uriah Heep and Mr Micawber, the latter being partly based on Dickens's father.

Charles Dickens (1812–1870) was born at Landport near Portsmouth, England, where the happiest years of his childhood were spent. His father's financial difficulties forced him to work at a very early age. This were the darkest period of his life. He was however able to return to school and at fifteen became a solicitor's clerk and a parliamentary reporter. In his travels throughout England, he met many people, some of whom have been immortalised in his novels. Underlying the fun and humour and eccentric characters, is a deep sadness for the injustice and cruelty of the times that marks most of Dickens's works.

Contents

1 I am born / *1*

2 A gentleman visits my mother / *5*

3 Yarmouth / *8*

4 Mr Murdstone and his sister / *12*

5 I am sent away from home / *19*

6 My first term at school / *23*

7 My holidays / *27*

8 I have a memorable birthday / *31*

9 I am neglected and begin to earn my living / *34*

10 I form a great resolution / *42*

11 I reach Dover / *46*

12 My aunt makes up her mind about me / *52*

13 I make another beginning / *59*

14 Uriah Heep / *64*

15 I look about me / *67*

16 I choose my profession / *75*

17 I fall in love and meet old friends / *78*

18 A loss and a greater loss / *83*

19 My aunt astonishes / *88*

20 Mr Dick tries to be useful / *93*

21 My dream comes true / *97*

22 Intelligence / *101*

23 I am involved in a mystry / *106*

24 I assist at an explosion / *109*

25 The storm / *119*

26 A light shines on my way / *125*

Exercises / *131*

1 I am born

I was born at Blunderstone, in Suffolk. My father died six months before I was born. Our house was called 'The Rookery' but there were no rooks about. In the evenings, as my mother and I sat by the fireside in the warm, bright living-room, I would sometimes think of my father's white grave-stone in the cold, dark churchyard and feel very sad for him.

My great aunt, Miss Betsey Trotwood, was the only person alive on my father's side of the family. She lived alone in a cottage in a small village on the sea coast. My father was once her favourite nephew, but he fell out of favour when he got married. She was angry because he had married a very young woman and they had never seen each other again. A year after the marriage, my father died.

One evening, before I was born, my mother was sitting by the fireside. She looked up and saw a strange lady coming up the garden. She at once knew that it was Miss Betsey Trotwood as she had heard about her from my father. Miss Trotwood held herself very straight as she walked up to the house with a very serious face. Instead of ringing the door bell, she looked through the window, pressing her nose against the glass.

My poor mother was very frightened at this strange behaviour. She got up from her chair at once and stood behind it. Miss Betsey ordered her to let her in, and my mother went to the door.

"Mrs David Copperfield, I think," she said. "You've heard of Miss Trotwood, I'm sure?"

rook: a large, black bird
great aunt: father's aunt

"Yes,—please come in," said my mother.

"Take off your cap, child," said Miss Betsey, "and let me see you." My mother obeyed and as she did so, her thick, beautiful hair fell all about her face.

"Why, bless my heart!" exclaimed Miss Betsey. "You're just a baby!"

My mother looked very young for her age. She hung her head as though it was her fault and began crying. She thought she felt my aunt touch her hair, with a gentle hand. When she looked up, Miss Betsey was seated with her legs stretched out, and looking at the fire.

"What do you call your girl?"

"I don't know whether it'll be a girl," said my mother.

"I don't mean that," said my aunt pointing at my mother. "I mean your servant girl."

"Peggotty!" said my mother.

"Peggotty!" repeated my aunt. "How on earth did she get such a name?"

"It's her surname, madam," said my mother. "Mr Copperfield called her by it, because her Christian name happened to be the same as mine."

"Here, Peggotty, tea!" cried Miss Betsey going to the door. "Your mistress is not well, hurry!"

"You were speaking about the child being a girl," said Miss Betsey. "I've no doubt it will be a girl. Now child, from the time of the birth of this girl—."

"Perhaps boy," my mother said.

"I tell you it will be a girl," returned Miss Betsey. "From the time of the birth of this girl, I'm going to be her friend. I want to be her godmother, and I want you to call her

godmother: a person, who at the time of a child's baptism, takes the responsibility of his/her Christian upbringing

Betsey Trotwood Copperfield. She must be well brought up—do you know anything about keeping accounts and taking care of a house?"

"Not much, but Mr Copperfield was teaching me..." and my mother broke down again.

"No, no, don't cry any more," said Miss Betsey. "You'll make yourself ill and that'll be bad for you and the baby. You mustn't do that." This quietened my mother.

"What has your husband left you?" asked Miss Betsey by and by.

"Mr Copperfield left me an income of a hundred and five pounds a year, madam," said my mother.

Peggotty came in with the tea. She saw how ill my mother looked and sent for the doctor at once.

When Mr Chillip, the doctor and Peggotty took my mother upstairs to her room, Miss Betsey put some cotton into her ears and sat in the living-room, waiting. Hours passed. Mr Chillip came downstairs. He saw Miss Betsey walking up and down the room.

"Well, doctor, how is she?" asked Aunt Betsey.

"Mrs Copperfield is quite as comfortable as we can expect a young mother to be. You'll soon be able to see her."

"And she,—how is she?" said Aunt Betsey. Mr Chillip did not seem to understand.

"The baby," said my aunt, "how is she?"

"Madam," returned Mr Chillip, "I thought you knew. It's a boy."

My aunt did not say a word. She put on her bonnet, and walked straight out of the house. She never came back again. And that was how I, David Copperfield, was born.

bonnet: a woman's hat that is tied under the chin with ribbons

2 A gentleman visits my mother

I remember very clearly my mother and Peggotty sitting in the living-room in the evenings. My mother had shining, black hair, which was also curly. She would often wind her hair round her fingers. Peggotty had dark eyes; her cheeks and hands were dark and red—they made me think of apples. I remember our house, 'The Rookery'. Peggotty's kitchen opened into a backyard. There was a large kennel in the backyard without any dog. There was a long passage leading from Peggotty's kitchen to the front door. Outside in the garden the trees were full of fruit and there were as many butterflies as there were flowers.

Peggotty and I were sitting one night by the fireside. She sat with her needle-work while I read to her about crocodiles. My mother had gone out to spend the evening with a friend of hers. "Peggotty," said I, after a while, "did you ever marry?"

"Good Lord, Master Davy," replied Peggotty. "Whatever put marriage into your head?"

"Did you ever marry, Peggotty?" said I. I thought she was a handsome woman, though she belonged to a different class of beauty from my mother's.

"But what made you think of marriage now?"

"I don't know—you can't marry more than one person at a time, can you, Peggotty?"

"Certainly not," said Peggotty.

"But if you marry a person, and that person dies, you can marry another person, can't you Peggotty?"

"You can, if you wish to, Davy, but that depends on one's opinion."

"What's your opinion, Peggotty?"

"My opinion is—that you should go on reading." Her voice was strange. I looked at her.

"You're not angry with me, Peggotty?" I asked.

She put aside her work and kissed me.

"Let me hear more about them—about those things—you were reading some time ago," she said. I could not understand why she was so eager to go back to the crocodiles. We had just finished reading about the crocodiles when the bell rang. We went to the door. There was my mother, looking unusually pretty, and with her a gentleman with black hair and very dark eyes. This gentleman had walked home with us from church last Sunday.

My mother bent down and kissed me. The gentleman patted me on the head; but somehow, I did not like him. I did not like his hand touching my mother's in touching me. I put it away.

"Oh, Davy!" said my mother, "you shouldn't be rude to people, when they're nice to you."

"Let's say good-night, my fine boy," said the gentleman.

"Good-night," said I.

After he left, my mother sat at the other end of the living-room and began singing to herself. Peggotty had not said a word till then. She shut the windows and, standing up very straight in the middle of the room with a candle in hand, said: "I hope you had a pleasant evening, madam."

"Thank you," said my mother, "it was indeed a pleasant evening."

I was sitting in a chair end fell asleep but I could hear their voices though I did not know what they were saying. When I half awoke, I found Peggotty and my mother both in tears, and both talking.

"My Copperfield wouldn't have liked such a person!"

"Good Heavens!" cried my mother. "How dare you speak such unkind words to me!"

"But you must not do it! No!" said Peggotty.

"My dear boy," cried my mother, coming to me, "my own little Davy, she says I don't love you!"

"I did not say that!" cried Peggotty.

"Davy, am I a bad Mama to you? Am I cruel and unkind? I do love you, don't I, David?"

We all began to cry together and I was the loudest of all. Peggotty made it up with my mother. I went to bed feeling very sad, and I fell asleep crying in my mother's arms.

The following Sunday the gentleman walked back from Church with my mother. This gentleman, Mr Murdstone—I knew his name by now—often came to our place. I liked him no better than I did at first. I somehow knew that Peggotty too did not like him.

One evening, Peggotty and I were together in the living-room. She looked at me trying to say something.

"Master Davy," she said at last, would you like to go along with me and spend a fortnight at my brother's at Yarmouth?"

"Is your brother a nice man, Peggotty?" I asked.

"Oh yes, of course," said Peggotty. "Then there's the sea at Yarmouth and boats and ships, and fishermen and the beach, and young Ham to play with." Young Ham was Peggotty's nephew. I was very happy at the idea.

"But what about Mama? We can't leave her alone, Peggotty."

"She'll let us go," said Peggotty. "I'll ask her as soon as she comes home. She's going to stay with Mrs Grayper."

I little knew then what it was that I was leaving forever.

3 Yarmouth

The cart we were travelling in stopped at many places to deliver goods. I carried my eye over the flat land that lay stretched near the sea—it was a dull waste without trees and bushes. When we had gone some distance into the town, I got the smell of fish and saw sailors walking about and carts.

"Here's my Ham!" shouted Peggotty as she saw her nephew waiting for us.

He was a tall, strong fellow but with a boy's face and curly, light hair which gave him a sheepish look. We walked through the lanes, went past the boat-builder's yards and such places till we came upon the flat, open space that I had seen before.

"There's our house, Mas'r Davy," said Ham, pointing to a large old black boat. It had an iron pipe at the top which served as a chimney and smoke was coming out of it. I was delighted. It was a large flat boat. There was a door cut in its side; it had little windows in it, and the top was covered with a wooden roof. It was a real boat which had been out on the sea! What fun to live in a boat on dry land!

We went into the house; it was very clean inside. We were welcomed by a woman in a white apron and a beautiful little girl with blue beads round her neck. We had a good meal—fish, melted butter and potatoes. Soon after dinner, a big, hairy man with a very good-natured face came in. He gave Peggotty a kiss on her cheek; it was her brother, Mr Peggotty.

He turned to me and said, "Glad to see you sir, we're proud to have you here. You'll find us rough, sir, but you'll find us ready."

I thanked him and replied, "I am sure Mr Peggotty, I shall be happy in such a delightful place."

Peggotty opened a little door and showed me my bedroom. There was a small mirror on the wall framed with shells, and a little bed, just enough for me. There was the smell of fish everywhere in the house.

When she led me to my bedroom, Peggotty told me that Ham and Emily were orphans and her brother had adopted them in their childhood. Ham's father was Mr Peggotty's brother who was drowned at sea. Emily's father was Mr Peggotty's brother-in-law who also was drowned at sea. The woman in a white apron, Mrs Gummidge, was a widow of his friend who had died very poor. Mr Peggotty was a poor man himself, she said, but "as good as gold and as true as steel."

Next morning Emily and I walked along by the sea.

"You love the sea, don't you?" I said.

"No," replied Emily, shaking her head, "I saw it when it tore a boat to pieces and I saw when it was cruel to some of our men."

"Was your father in the boat then?" I asked.

"Not that boat," said Emily. "I don't remember my father."

"But Davy," she said, as she looked about for shells, "Your father was a gentleman and your mother is a lady; my father was a fisherman and my mother was a fisherman's daughter, and my uncle Dan is a fisherman."

"Your uncle must be very good, I think?"

"Good?" said Emily. "If I ever become a lady, I'd give him a sky-blue coat with diamond buttons, silk trousers, a red velvet waistcoat, a large gold watch, a silver pipe, and a box of money."

We went on again, picking up shells.

"You'd like to be a lady, Emily?" I asked.

She looked at me, and laughed and nodded. This, I thought, was a good wish on her part. We walked on and came to a jetty where the ships came to the shore. She ran along the wooden board which stood out over the water and I was afraid for her. Then she came running back and I laughed at my fears.

I was in love with little Emily. It was the pure, innocent love of a little boy for a little girl. We spent hours walking and playing by the seashore, and in the evenings we sat side by side on the box by the fireside and Mrs Gummidge would whisper to Peggotty, "Aren't they beautiful together?"

So the two weeks slipped away.

The day came which marked the end of my visit. I was very sad to leave my little Emily. We walked arm-in-arm to the public house where the carrier was standing. When we were on the road I promised Emily that I would write to her. As the cart moved away, I felt an emptiness in my heart. Soon the thought of going home to my mother filled me with joy. I wondered why Peggotty did not share my joy.

At last I saw Blunderstone Rookery. How well I remember the cold grey afternoon and the dark rain clouds that hung in the sky! The door opened and I looked, half laughing and half crying, for my mother. It was not she, but a strange servant at the door.

"Why! Peggotty!" I said, "Hasn't she come home?"

Peggotty took me by the hand, led me into the kitchen and shut the door.

"Peggotty!" I said, quite frightened. What's the matter? Why hasn't Mama come to the gate? Peggotty, is she—is she dead?" My eyes were full.

"No!" said Peggotty. "I should've told you before, Davy. Davy, you've got a new father."

I trembled and turned white.

"A new father?" I repeated.

"Come and see him," she said.

"I don't want to see him."

"—And your Mama," said Peggotty.

We went to the living-room where Peggotty left me. On one side of the fire sat my mother, and on the other side Mr Murdstone. My mother dropped her work and got up hurriedly, but hesitated.

"Now, Clara, my dear," said Mr Murdstone. "Remember! Control yourself, always control yourself! Davy, my boy, how do you do?"

I gave him my hand. I stood for a while and went to my mother and kissed her. She kissed me and patted me gently on my shoulder, and sat down again to work. I was afraid to look at her, I was afraid to look at him. He was looking at us both.

As soon as I could get away, I crept upstairs. My old bedroom was changed and it was very far away from my mother's. I went downstairs and found everything changed there too. I went into the yard. There was a big black dog, black-haired like Him; he was very angry to see me and tried to jump at me.

4 Mr Murdstone and his sister

With what a heavy heart I went to my room! I sat on my bed with my hands crossed; I thought no one wanted me, no one loved me—half as much as Emily did. And I cried myself to sleep. I woke up when I heard my mother's voice—"Here he is!" My mother and Peggotty had come to look for me.

"Davy," said my mother, "what's the matter?"

I thought it strange that she should ask me, and answered, "Nothing." I turned over on my face to hide my trembling lip.

"Davy," said my mother. "Davy, my child!" These words, calling me her child, brought my tears back. I hid my tears in my bedclothes, and pressed her from me with my hand. I felt the touch of a hand that I knew was neither hers nor Peggotty's and slipped to my feet at the bedside. It was Mr Murdstone's hand, and he kept it on my arm as he said: "What's this? Clara, my love, have you forgotten?—Firmness, my dear!"

"I'm sorry, Edward," said my mother. "I meant to be good."

"Go down to the living-room, my dear," said Mr Murdstone. "David and I will come down together," He then turned a dark face to Peggotty, who left immediately. When we were left alone, he shut the door. He sat on a chair and still holding me before him he said, "David, if I have a horse or a dog that doesn't obey me, what do you think I'll do?"

"I don't know."

"I will beat him. I will beat him till I make him obey me. Now wash your face and come down with me."

I obeyed.

"Clara, my dear," he said, as he led me into the living-room with his hand still on my arm. "You'll not be made uncomfortable any more." I thought my mother was sorry to see me standing in the room so frightened and strange. From what was said at the table, I understood that Mr Murdstone's eldest sister was coming to stay with us. I also learnt that Mr Murdstone and his sister had some share in a wine-merchant's house in London.

After dinner we were sitting by the fire. I was thinking how I could escape to Peggotty, when a coach drove up to the garden-gate. Mr Murdstone went out to receive the visitor. My mother followed him. I was timidly following her, when she turned round at the door of the living-room; taking me in her arms, she whispered to me to love my new father and be obedient to him. She did this hurriedly and secretly but tenderly.

It was Miss Murdstone who had arrived. She was a gloomy-looking lady, dark like her brother. She brought with her two heavy black boxes made of iron. She took money out of a hard steel purse to pay the coachman. I had never seen such a metallic lady as Miss Murdstone. She looked at me and said: "Is that your boy, sister-in-law? I don't like boys." And then turning to me, "How do you do, boy?"

I replied that I was very well and hoped that she was the same.

From all that was going on I could understand that she had come to stay with us for good. On the first morning of her arrival, she told my mother that the household duties were too much for such a delicate, pretty lady as my mother and that she would free her from them. From that time, Miss Murdstone kept my mother's keys in her own little steel purse all day, and under her pillow all night.

The presence of Mr Murdstone and his sister darkened

our lives. How dreadful were those Sundays when we had to go to church—Miss Murdstone in a stiff velvet gown following close behind me as we entered the church; then my mother; then her husband. There was no Peggotty to go with us to church as in the old days. There was some talk of sending me to a boarding school. The idea came from Mr and Miss Murdstone; my mother, of course, agreed with them. They had not quite decided yet.

Shall I ever forget those lessons! I was taught by my mother but Mr Murdstone and his sister were always present. One morning, I came with my books to the living-room after breakfast. My mother was ready for me at her writing-desk, but not half so ready as Mr Murdstone in his easy-chair by the window, or Miss Murdstone, on a chair near my mother.

I gave the first book to my mother—grammar, geography, history, I don't know which. I took another hurried look at the page before I gave it into her hand, and started off aloud. I tripped over a word. Mr Murdstone looked up. I tripped over another word. Miss Murdstone looked up. I grew red in the face, stumbled over half-a-dozen words, and stopped. My mother said, "Oh, Davy, Davy!"

"Now, Clara," said Mr Murdstone, "be firm with the boy. Don't say, "Oh, Davy, Davy!" He either knows his lesson or he doesn't know it."

"He does not know it," Miss Murdstone said. "Give him the book back, Clara, and make him know it."

"Yes, Jane," said my mother. "Now, Davy, try once more, and don't be stupid."

I tried once more. But I stumbled before I came to the old place at a point where I was all right before, and stopped to think. Mr Murdstone made a movement of impatience. Miss Murdstone did the same. My mother tried to help

tripped over a word: was unable to read the word correctly

me by moving her lips.

"Clara!" said Miss Murdstone.

My mother coloured and smiled faintly. Mr Murdstone got out of his chair. He took the book, threw it at me, boxed my ears and turned me out of the room by the shoulders.

Sometimes Mr Murdstone would give me a terribly long sum. I would fail again and fall into disgrace for the rest of the evening. I knew I could have done very well in my studies if I had been without the Murdstones. Even when I did well in my morning lessons, I was given more work. The natural result of this treatment for six months was that I grew dull and stubborn.

One morning when I went into the living-room with my books, I found my mother looking worried, Miss Murdstone looking firm, and Mr Murdstone bending a cane and shaking it in the air.

"I tell you, Clara," said Mr Murdstone. "I was beaten quite often."

"Yes, of course," said Miss Murdstone.

"But do you think it did Edward good?" asked my mother trembling.

"Do you think it did Edward harm, Clara?" asked Mr Murdstone. To this my mother made no reply.

I knew they were talking about me and trembled.

"Now, David," said Mr Murdstone looking at me, still holding the cane, "you must be more careful today than usual." He bent the cane again and shook it in the air.

I felt the words of the lessons slipping off, not one by one, or line by line but by the whole page. We began badly and went on worse. I could not remember anything. And when we came to one of the lengthy sums my mother began to cry.

"Clara!" said Miss Murdstone.

"I'm not quite well, my dear Jane, I think," said my mother.

He got up and said, taking up the cane: "Why Jane, David has given enough worry and trouble to his mother today. It needs more firmness on her part to bear it. David, you and I will go upstairs, boy."

As he led me out of the door, my mother ran towards me. Miss Murdstone said, "Clara! are you a fool?" and stopped her. I heard my mother crying as we went upstairs. He led me up to my room slowly and when we got there, he suddenly twisted my head under his arm.

"Mr Murdstone! sir!" I cried to him. 'Don't! Pray don't beat me! I've tried to learn, sir, but I can't learn. I can't indeed!"

"Can't you, indeed?" he said. "We'll try that."

He held my head tightly. But somehow I turned round and stopped him for a second, begging him not to beat me. It was only for a second. He brought the cane down on me and in the next second I caught the hand with which he held me in my mouth, between my teeth, and bit it through. He beat me then as if he would beat me to death. We made a terrible noise—his beating and my cries. Above all the noise I heard my mother and Peggotty running up the stairs and crying out. Then he was gone, the door locked from outside and I was lying hot and shaking on the floor. Soon I broke into a fit of sobs. When I grew quiet and when everything in the house was silent, I began to feel that I had been very wicked.

I sat listening for a long while, but there was not a sound in the house. There were pains all over my body and I felt miserable. But nothing was more miserable than the guilt I felt within. Soon I heard the key turn. Miss Murdstone came in with some bread and milk. She laid it on the table and left, locking the door after her. Long after it was dark I sat near the window. What was going to

happen to me? Would I be sent to prison? Would they turn me out of the house?

I woke up next morning, cheerful and fresh, but the memory of the day before made me miserable again. My imprisonment lasted five days. I listened to all the sounds in the house—the ringing of bells, footsteps on the stairs, voices in the street outside. On the last night of the imprisonment, I heard my own name spoken in a whisper. Putting out my arms in the dark I said: "Is that you, Peggotty, dear?"

"Yes, my own Davy boy," she replied.

"How's Mama, dear Peggotty? Is she very angry with me?"

I could hear Peggotty crying softly on her side of the keyhole, as I was doing on my side. She answered, "No. Not very."

"What are they going to do with me, Peggotty? Do you know?"

"School. Near London. Tomorrow," was Peggotty's answer.

"Shan't I see Mama?"

"Yes," said Peggotty. "Morning."

Then Peggotty put her mouth close to the keyhole. "Davy dear," she said. " Haven't seen you often these last few days. But it isn't because I don't love you, my pretty darling. It's because I thought it better for you and for your mother that I didn't come and talk to you. Davy, my boy, are you listening? Can you hear?"

"Ye-ye-ye-yes, Peggotty!" I sobbed. Can you hear?"

"My own!" said Peggotty. "What I want to say, is this: I'll take as much care of your Mama, Davy—as I took care of you. Peggotty kissed the keyhole as she couldn't kiss me.

"Thank you, dear Peggotty!" said I. "Oh, thank you!"

6058

5 I am sent away from home

In the morning Miss Murdstone came to my room. She told me that I would be sent to school, and that I could go down for breakfast. There, in the living-room, I found my mother, very pale and with red eyes.

"Oh, Davy!" she cried, as I ran into her arms, "how could you be so wicked!" I begged my mother to forgive me. They made her believe that I was a wicked fellow.

"Bring down Master Copperfield's box!" said Miss Murdstone, when wheels were heard at the gate. I looked for Peggotty, but I could not find her anywhere. The familiar carrier was at the door. My box was brought down and lifted into the cart.

"Good-bye, David. You'll be home in the holidays, and be a better boy," said my mother and held me in her arms.

"Clara!" said Miss Murdstone.

"Yes, dear Jane," replied my mother. Miss Murdstone led me to the gate; I got into the cart, and the lazy horse started off with it at his slow pace.

We had gone about half a mile, and my pocket handkerchief was quite wet through, when the carrier suddenly pulled up the horse. To my great surprise, I saw Peggotty come out of a bush and climb into the cart. She took me in both her arms and without a word, she filled my pockets with some paper bags of cakes and put a purse in my hand. After another hug she got down from the cart and ran away. When the cart moved I opened the purse. Peggotty had put three bright shillings in it. There were two

shilling: old British coin worth one-twentieth of a pound

half-crowns folded in a bit of paper, on which my mother had written, 'For Davy, with my love.' This brought fresh tears to my eyes.

After we had jogged on for some little time, I took out a cake and offered it to Mr Barkis, the carrier.

"Did she make those cakes?" he asked after a while.

"Peggotty, you mean? Yes, she did."

"Oh," he said, and sat looking the horse's ears as we went along.

Mr Barkis leaned back after some time and said, "Well, now, I'll tell you what, perhaps you'll be writing to her?"

"I certainly will," I replied.

"Ah!" he said slowly turning his eyes towards me. "Then when you write to her, perhaps you'll remember to say that Barkis is willing."

"That Barkis is willing," I repeated. "Is that all the message?"

"Ye-es," he nodded, "yes, Barkis is willing." I could not understand the meaning of the message, but I promised to give it to Peggotty.

It was afternoon when we reached Yarmouth. Mr Barkis turned into an inn-yard. I got down from the cart; the coach was in the yard. Mr Barkis put my box beside the coach and climbing into his cart, rode away. I was wondering what was going to happen to me now, when a lady looked out of a window of the inn and said, "Is that the little gentleman from Blunderstone?"

"Yes, madam," I said.

She called a waiter in the inn and asked him to take me into the house and give me a meal. After I had eaten, I asked for a sheet of paper and inkstand, and wrote a note

half-crown: two and a half shillings

to Peggotty:

'My dear Peggotty,
I have come here safe. Barkis is willing. Give my love to Mama.
Yours affectionately,
Davy.'

It was late afternoon when we left Yarmouth by the stage-coach and we reached London at eight the next morning. Soon the coach was empty of passengers. I waited, wondering whether any one would turn up at all for me. A pale and thin man with rusty hair and dressed in black clothes came up to the clerk at the booking-office and spoke to him. He told the clerk that a carrier would call for my box.

Then he took me by the hand and led me out of the office. He told me that he was Mr Mell, one of the masters of Salem House and that he had come to fetch me. We had to catch another coach to go to Blackheath where Salem House was. The coach stopped when it came to the top of a hill and we got down. A short walk brought us to a dull and unattractive building enclosed by a high brick wall. The place was very quiet, so quiet that I asked Mr Mell, "Have the boys gone out, sir?"

"Don't you know that it's holiday time? The boys are at their homes. Mr Creakle, the owner of the school, is also away. You're sent here in holiday-time as a punishment for your misbehaviour."

We went into the school-room. It was a long room with rows of desks. Scraps of old copybooks lay on the floor. There was ink splashed on the wall and on the floor. I observed all this as I walked slowly to the other end of the room. Suddenly I came near a desk on which there was a white cardboard; on it was written in a beautiful

stage-coach: a large carriage that takes passengers on long journeys, along a regular route

hand the words: 'Take care. He Bites'.

At once I got up on the desk, afraid there was a dog somewhere about the place. "I beg your pardon, sir," I asked Mr Mell, "Is there a dog, sir, the one that bites?"

"No, Copperfield," he said, "that's not a dog. That's a boy. I'm asked to put this placard on your back. I'm sorry to do it, but I've got to." And he took me down, tied the placard on my shoulders and said that I should not remove it. Nobody can understand what suffering I went through with it. I always felt that somebody behind it.

My first days in the empty school were dull and dreary. I had plenty of study and exercises to do with Mr Mell. But I did them; there was no Mr and Miss Murdstone here, and I got through them without much difficulty.

6 My first term at school

About a month passed by in the empty school building. One day the man with a wooden leg, Tungay, began to stump about with a mop and a bucket of water. Two days later, Mr Mell informed me that Mr Creakle would be back that evening. In the evening after dinner, Tungay led me before him.

I went trembling in to Mr Creakle's presence. He was seated in an arm-chair. Mrs Creakle and his daughter Miss Creakle were also there. Mr Creakle was a stout man with a red face, and small deep eyes. I found that he had no voice and spoke in a whisper.

"So this is the young man whose teeth are to be filed!" said he, fixing his eyes on me. "Come here, sir!"

"Come here!" said Tungay loudly.

"I have the pleasure of knowing your step-father very well," Mr Creakle whispered, taking me by the ear. "Do you know me? Hey?" He pinched my ear.

"Not yet, sir," I said, drawing back with pain.

"Not yet, hey?" repeated Mr Creakle. "But you'll know me soon, hey?"

"I'll tell you what I am," whispered Mr Creakle, pinching my ear hard which brought tears to my eyes. "I'm a Tartar. And when I want something done, it will be done."

"Will be done," repeated Tungay.

"Well, Mr Creakle said, "now you've begun to know me, my young friend, you may go." I was glad to get this order and go back to the lonely dormitory.

Tartar: a cruel, rough person

Next morning, Mr Sharp came back. Mr Sharp was Mr Mell's superior. The first of the boys to appear was Tommy Traddles. He enjoyed the placard on my back a great deal and presented me to every other boy saying, "Look here! Here's a game." This was good in a way, because none of the boys asked for any explanation. But some of them wildly danced about me, some patted me saying "Lie down, Towzer," as if I were a dog and asked me not to bite. This brought some tears to my eyes; but on the whole, I must say, it was not as bad as I had expected.

"But you're not one of us yet until you're received by J Steerforth," said one of the boys. J Steerforth was at the time in a shed in the playground and I was taken before him as before a judge. He was very popular with all the boys and they said he was a great scholar. He was very good-looking and six years my senior. He asked me about my placard and why I was punished. When I told him, he said that it was 'a jolly shame'.

I heard all kinds of things about the school. I heard that Mr Creakle was the hardest of the masters, and that he caned the boys without mercy; he knew nothing and was more ignorant than the dullest boy in school. There was only one boy on whom he never dared to lay his hands and that was J Steerforth. I heard that Mr Sharp and Mr Mell were not paid well by Mr Creakle and that Mr Mell was very poor.

I thought of Steerforth a good deal after I went to bed. Once I raised myself on my elbow and looked at him. He lay in the moonlight, his handsome face turned up, and his head resting on his arm.

School began the next day. How the noise and uproar in the schoolroom changed to deathly silence when Mr Creakle entered! Tungay was at Mr Creakle's elbow, and quite unnecessarily bellowed, "Silence!"

Mr Creakle was seen to speak, and Tungay was heard:

"Now, boys, this is a new term in school. Be careful how you behave. Come fresh up to your lessons, I advise you, for I come fresh up to the punishment. Now get to work everybody!"

Tommy Traddles was the merriest and also the most miserable of all the boys. He was always caned, and was always going to write to his uncle about it, but never did. He was a very honourable lad and believed that all the boys should stand by one another. He suffered for this on many occasions. My continued friendship with the great Steerforth was the happiest thing in my life at Salem House. One thing that pained me about Steerforth was the way he treated poor Mr Mell.

One afternoon, Tungay came in and called out in his usual strong voice: "Visitors for Copperfield!" To my great wonder and delight I found Mr Peggotty and Ham waiting for me. I was also very, very happy. I laughed and laughed till I wiped my eyes with my pocket handkerchief.

"Cheer up, Mas'r Davy!" said Ham. "Why, how you've grown!"

"Do you know how Mama is, Mr Peggotty?" I said. "And how is my dear, old Peggotty? And Mrs Gummidge and Little Emily?"

"All very well," said Mr Peggotty, "and Em'ly's getting to be a woman. Ask Ham."

Ham beamed with delight as he nodded and said, "She can read and write very well now, Master Davy." Mr Peggotty then took two large lobsters and a large bag of shrimps out of his pockets and placed them in my hands.

Just then Steerforth who was passing by, singing a tune, saw me with two strangers. He stopped his singing and said, "I didn't know you were here, young Copperfield!" and was about to leave the room.

"Don't go, Steerforth, please. These are two Yarmouth

boatmen—my friends—who are relations of my nurse, and have come to see me."

"I'm glad to see them. How are you both?" he said.

"Mr Peggotty, if you please," I said, "I'll bring him to Yarmouth to see your house on my next visit. You'd never have seen such a good house, Steerforth. It's made out of a boat!"

"You're welcome," said Mr Peggotty to Steerforth, while Ham was bowing and nodding. "I'm rough, sir, but I'm ready."

"Thank you, I wish you both well," Steerforth said, as he turned to go.

We carried the lobsters and the shrimps to our room and made a great supper that evening.

7 My holidays

The end of the half-year came and school closed. I was in the stage-coach again and reached Yarmouth by day-break. Mr Barkis the carrier came at nine o'clock in the morning. We got into the cart and I was on my way home.

"I gave your message, Mr Barkis," I said. "I wrote to Peggotty."

"Ah!" said Mr Barkis, "but there was no answer to it."

"Are you waiting for an answer?" I asked. "Would you like me to tell her, Mr Barkis?"

When we reached home the carrier put my box down at the garden gate, and left me. No face appeared at the window or at the door, and without knocking I went in with a quiet, timid step.

I heard my mother singing in a low tone. Who could she be singing to, I wondered. I went softly into the room. She was sitting by the fire with a small baby in her arms, whose tiny hand she held against her neck. No one else was with her. Her eyes were looking down upon its face, and she was singing to it.

I spoke to her, and she gave a start and a cry. But when she saw me, she called me her dear Davy, her own boy! She kissed me and held my head and put the baby's hand to my lips.

Oh, what happiness! I wish I had died then.

"He's your brother," said my mother. "Davy, my own boy! my poor child!" and kissed me again and again. At that moment Peggotty came running in and went about us both for a quarter of an hour. They had not expected me to arrive so soon; the carrier had gone to get me long

before his usual time. Mr and Miss Murdstone had gone out on a visit.

We dined together by the fireside. Peggotty brought me my own plate with the ship painted on it and my own old mug with 'David' on it. While we were at the table I told Peggotty about Mr Barkis. She began to laugh, throwing her apron over her face.

"Peggotty," said my mother, "what's the matter?"

Peggotty only laughed the more, and held her apron tight over the face when my mother tried to pull it away.

"He...he wants to marry me!" cried Peggotty and continued her laughter.

"It would be a good match for you, Peggotty," said my mother.

"Oh! I don't know," said Peggotty. Her face was red now. And again she was taken by a fit of laughter.

I saw that my mother, though she smiled when Peggotty looked at her, was serious and thoughtful. I noticed for the first time the change in her appearance. Her face was pretty still but pale and tired. She laid her hand affectionately on the hand of her old servant and said, "Peggotty, dear, you're not going to get married, now?"

"Never!" cried Peggotty.

My mother then said, "Don't leave me Peggotty. Stay with me. It won't be for long, perhaps."

"Me leave you, my precious!" cried Peggotty. She used to talk to my mother as if she was a little girl, when alone. "No, my dear, though some Cats would be pleased, if I did. But they won't be pleased because I won't leave. I'll stay with you till I'm very old, and then when I'm of no use I'll go to my Davy and ask him to take me in."

"And Peggotty," said I, "I'll make you as welcome as a queen!"

"Bless your dear heart!" cried Peggotty. "I know you will."

We sat round the fire, and talked delightfully. I told them about school. I took the little baby in my arms and fondled it lovingly. I crept close to my mother's side and sat with my arms round her waist, my cheek on her shoulder. I once more felt her beautiful hair falling over me—like an angel's wing—and was very happy indeed.

It was almost ten o'clock before we heard the sound of wheels. We all got up and my mother said, "You better go to bed, dear." I kissed her, and went upstairs before they came in.

I felt uncomfortable to go down to breakfast in the morning, as I had never set eyes on Mr Murdstone since the day I bit his hand. He was standing before the fire with his back to it, while Miss Murdstone made the tea.

"I beg your pardon, sir, I'm very sorry for what I did, and please forgive me."

"I'm glad to hear you're sorry," he replied and gave me a hard look.

"How do you do, madam?" I said to Miss Murdstone.

"Ah, dear me!" sighed Miss Murdstone, "How long are the holidays?"

"A month madam, counting from today."

I was not a favourite with Miss Murdstone. In fact, I was not a favourite there with anybody. Those who did like me could not show, it, and those who did not, showed it very clearly. I felt that I made them as uncomfortable as they made me and I tried to keep myself as much out of their way as I could. In the evening, I sat in my cold bedroom, wrapped in a coat, reading a book. Sometimes, I went to the kitchen and sat with Peggotty.

"David," said Mr Murdstone, one day after dinner when I was about to leave the room, "you stay by yourself in your

own room and never spend the evening in the living-room. I don't like it. I'll see that you show a respectful and ready obedience towards me, towards Jane Murdstone and to your mother." I no longer went to my room in the evenings or took comfort in Peggotty's company. I sat in the living-room day after day, looking forward to night and bedtime.

The holidays went slowly by, until the morning came when Miss Murdstone said, "Here's the last day off!" I was not sorry to go. I was looking forward to school and to Steerforth although the image of Mr Creakle dampened my thoughts. Again Mr Barkis appeared at the gate, and again Miss Murdstone said, in her warning voice, "Clara!" when my mother bent over me to bid me farewell.

I kissed my mother and my baby brother and was very sorry then, but was not sorry to go away. I was in the carrier's cart when I heard my mother calling to me. I looked out, and she stood at the garden-gate alone, holding her baby in her arms.

8 I have a memorable birthday

Two months had passed by since I returned to Salem House. Steerforth was going to leave at the end of the year. The month of March came and with it my birthday. After breakfast we were in the playground when we were called back to the schoolroom. A minute later, Mr Sharp entered and said: "David Copperfield is wanted at the visitor's room."

I expected some gift from Peggotty and brightened at the order. I jumped out of my seat with great readiness.

"Don't hurry, David," said Mr Sharp.

I went to the visitor's room where I found Mr Creakle seated at a table with a newspaper and a cane before him and Mrs Creakle with an opened letter in her hand.

"David Copperfield," said Mrs Creakle gently, leading me to a sofa. "I've something to tell you, my child." There was a pause before she continued, "you're too young to understand how the world changes everyday," she went on, "and to know that the people in it pass away. But we all have to learn it, David."

I looked at her, wondering what was coming next.

"When you left home, was your Mama well?"

I trembled without knowing why.

"I asked because I hear this morning that she is very ill."

"Your Mama's dead, David," said Mrs Creakle softly now; but I had already burst into tears before she said it.

Mrs Creakle was very kind to me and comforted me as best as she could.

When I left Salem House, the next evening, I little thought I should never return. I looked out for Mr Barkis when we reached Yarmouth in the morning but he was not there. Instead a merry-looking little old man came up to the coach window, and said: "Master Copperfield?"

"Yes, sir."

"Will you come with me, young sir, if you please," he said, opening the door, "and I'll have the pleasure of taking you home."

I put my hand in his, wondering who he was, and we walked till we came to a shop in a narrow street on which was written:
OMER, DRAPER, TAILOR, FUNERAL FURNISHER & CO.

A fat man who was Mr Omer came out and said, "Will you walk into the shop, Master Copperfield?"

I went in. He showed me a roll of black cloth, took my measurements and noted them in a book. I heard that an order had been placed with Messrs Omer & Sons for a coffin for my mother. Then he took me into the room behind, and ordered tea and bread-and-butter for me.

I could hardly eat and I sat with my head leaning on my hand. I learnt from Mr Omer that my baby brother too, was dead. As soon as the coffin was ready, it was put into a grey cart drawn by a black horse. Mr Omer and I climbed into it and we drove home.

I was in Peggotty's arms before I got to the door and she took me into the house. Mr Murdstone took no notice of me when I went into the living-room. He sat by the fireside, with his chin resting on his palm. Miss Murdstone who was very busy at her writing- desk, gave me her cold fingers. Peggotty took me to my mother's bedroom where my mother and her baby lay. A few days later the funeral took place. It was a cold winter day. At the churchyard, our neighbour Mr Grayper, the physician Mr Chillip and

a few others were present. We got home, and I went up to my room. I knew that Peggotty would come to me in my room. She sat down by my side upon my little bed and holding my hand, told me how it all happened.

"She wasn't very well for a long time. She was also not very happy. I'd often seen her sitting alone and crying silently. When her baby was born, I thought at first, that she was feeling better. But she had grown weaker and was not as she used to be in the old days. The only time I saw her like her old self again was the day when you came home from school, and when the Murdstones were out of the way. The day you went away she told me she would never see her Davy again."

From that day, the thought of my mother as she was of late vanished from me. I remembered her only as a young mother with her pretty hair, winding her bright curls round and round her finger and smiling at me.

9 I am neglected and begin to earn my living

"Peggotty," I said in a thoughtful whisper one evening, when I was warming my hands at the kitchen fire. "Mr Murdstone likes me less than he used to. Not that he liked me much ever, but now he doesn't even like to see me."

Peggotty stroked my hair for some time. She said nothing for a while. I sat warming my hands at the fire.

"Davy," she said.

"Yes, Peggotty?"

"Miss Murdstone has given me notice to leave.

"And what'll you do, Peggotty?" I asked much troubled at this piece of information.

"I think I'll be forced to go to Yarmouth," replied Peggotty, "and live there. Davy, they don't seem to want you here at present. I wonder whether they'll let you go along with me for a few days." My heart leaped with joy as I remembered my earlier visit to Peggotty's home at Yarmouth. Miss Murdstone came into the kitchen a little later. Peggotty suggested that I should go with her to Yarmouth.

"The boy'll be idle there," said Miss Murdstone, "and idleness is the root of all evil. But he'll be idle here—or anywhere else." I could see that Peggotty was about to make an angry retort but held herself back for my sake. "But it's more important that my brother should be free from everything. So I'd better say yes."

I thanked her, and tried to hide my joy; I was afraid she might take back her permission.

At the end of the month, Peggotty was ready to leave and I with her. The carrier's cart stopped outside, and to my surprise, Mr Barkis came into the house for Peggotty's boxes. Peggotty was sad to leave the house that had been her home for so many years.

When we reached Yarmouth, Mr Peggotty and Ham were waiting for us. They received Peggotty and me affectionately and shook hands with Mr Barkis. They were carrying Peggotty's boxes and mine into the cottage when Mr Barkis called me aside.

"You know who was willing? It was Barkis and Barkis only. It's all right now, you made it all right," said Mr Barkis, shaking hands, "I'm a friend of yours."

I joined Peggotty and as we were going along, she asked me what he had said; and when I told her, Peggotty laughed.

"Davy dear," she said, suddenly stopping, "how would you like it, if I were married?"

"You're going to marry Barkis, Peggotty?" I asked.

"Yes," said Peggotty.

"I must say it'll be a good thing. For then, Peggotty, you'll always have the horse and cart to bring you over to see me." She drew me into her arms and kissed me.

We came to Mr Peggotty's cottage. It looked just the same. But little Emily was nowhere to be seen. I asked Mr Peggotty about her.

"She's at school, sir," said Mr Peggotty. "She'll be home any minute."

Half an hour later Emily returned home from school. She looked taller and I found her face and her blue eyes brighter than before. She laughed every now and then and Mr Peggotty lovingly patted her with his great hand. Ham looked at her with admiration and delight, his face a burning red.

The days passed in much the same way as they had passed before except—it was a great exception—that Emily and I did not wander on the beach now. She had school to attend, and needle-work to do. She seemed to have got a great distance away from me in little more than a year. She liked me, but she laughed at me and teased me.

On the very first evening after our arrival, Mr Barkis appeared with a few oranges tied up in a handkerchief. He left them behind the door and told Ham they were meant for Peggotty. We all had a good laugh. Mr Barkis appeared every evening at the same hour, and always with a little bundle, which he regularly put behind the door, and left there.

One day, very near the end of my stay at Yarmouth, I was told that Mr Barkis would come to take Peggotty out the next morning and that Emily and I should go with him. Very early the next morning we were dressed and ready.

Away we went, on our holiday ride, and the first thing we did was to stop at a church. Mr Barkis tied the horse to a post outside and went into the church with Peggotty. Emily and I stayed outside talking about her school. Mr Barkis and Peggotty came out of the church and we drove away into the country. As we were going along Mr Barkis turned to me with a wink, "What name do you think I'll write now on my coat? It's Clara Peggotty Barkis!" and burst into a loud laughter that shook the carriage.

It was evening when we came to the old boat again. Mr and Mrs Barkis bade us good-bye and drove away to their own home. The next day Peggotty came. It was the last day of my stay at Yarmouth. On my way to Blunderstone, I spent the night in Peggotty's own house. It was a beautiful little home. Peggotty took me up to a little room in the roof and said, "Davy dear, as long as I'm alive and have this house over my head, this room shall be yours."

During the months that followed, my life was a strange

one for a boy. The Murdstones did not beat me or starve me. They disliked me and overlooked me. I went about the house or wandered down the lanes alone. I was not allowed to visit Peggotty. Faithful to her promise she either came to see me, or met me somewhere near, once every week, and never empty handed. Besides Peggotty's visits, the old books in my room were my only comfort.

I had been out one day, when turning the corner of the lane near our house, I came upon Mr Murdstone walking with a gentleman.

"Quinion," he said, "I've told you about him before. He's at home at present. I don't know what to do with him. He's a difficult boy."

Mr Quinion stayed at our house that night. After breakfast the next morning, I had put my chair away, and was going out of the room when Mr Murdstone called me back.

"David," said Mr Murdstone, "to the young this is a world of action, not for going about in a lazy manner." he continued. "You've received some education already. You'll have to fight your way in the world, and the sooner you begin it the better it is." He paused for a while and then continued again. "You've heard that I'm connected with the wine trade in London? Mr Quinion is the manager of the firm of Murdstone and Grinby's. We employ a number of boys, and Mr Quinion can find a place for you among them. So you're going to London, David, with Mr Quinion, to begin to earn your own living."

Next morning I left my house at Blunderstone for the last time. My only luggage was a small trunk.

I was ten years old when I made my start in the working world at Murdstone and Grinby's. The warehouse of Murdstone and Grinby was an old building at the

warehouse: storehouse

riverside in Blackfriars. Its walls were discoloured with the dirt and smoke of a hundred years.

I was led to a corner of a large room of the warehouse, where there were a few men and boys busy washing dirty bottles. A few other boys were busy fitting corks to new bottles freshly filled with wine. These boys had to seal the bottles, stick new labels on them, and carefully pack them in barrels. My place, I learned, was to be among these boys.

I cannot describe my secret feelings of sorrow and disappointment. I could never grow up to be a learned man and make a mark in life. I cannot describe the shame and misery I felt in my present state. I could not check my tears that mingled with the water in which I was washing the bottles.

The warehouse clock struck half past twelve and everybody prepared to go for his afternoon meal when Mr Quinion tapped at the window and ordered me to go to his office. I went in and found standing there a stout, middle-aged man in a brown suit with very little hair on his head. His clothes were not neat but he had a huge shirt collar. He carried a stick at the end of which was a pair of tassles. The stranger looked at me hard.

"So this," he said, in a rumbling but kind voice, "is Master Copperfield. I hope I see you well, sir?"

I said I was very well, and hoped he was.

"I am," said the stranger, "thank Heaven, quite well. I've received a letter from Mr Murdstone in which he says that I could take you as a lodger in a room at the back of my house. It is at present vacant.

"This is Mr Micawber," said Mr Quinion to me. "He's known to Mr Murdstone."

"My address," said Mr Micawber, "is Windsor Terrace, City Road. It's possible that you're not familiar with London

City and you might have difficulty in finding the City Road—in short," he said, "you might lose your way and therefore I'll call on you this evening, and show you the nearest way to my house."

"Thank you very much, sir," I replied.

"You may call in at about eight o'clock," said Mr Quinion.

"Very good, sir," said Mr Micawber; and he put his hat on, put his stick under his arm, and went out humming a tune. Mr Quinion told me that my wages were to be six shillings a week and he paid me my first week's money in advance. I went out to buy my first meal. I bought myself a meat pie, which I washed down with a drink at a neighbouring pump.

Mr Micawber reappeared at eight o'clock in the evening. We stopped at many places because Mr Micawber pointed out to me the names of the streets on his way home; he wanted me to find my way back to the warehouse easily the next morning.

At last we reached his house in Windsor Terrace. Like Mr Micawber it was not a neat house. He presented me to Mrs Micawber, a thin pale lady who was seated in the living-room with a baby in her arms. This baby was one of the twins. The other twin and two older children—Master Micawber, aged about four, and Miss Micawber, aged about three—were also in the room. The living-room was not furnished well and the first floor was completely unfurnished. My room was at the top of the house, at the back. Mrs Micawber came up to show me the room. She went on to tell me a good deal about Mr Micawber.

"If Mr Micawber's creditors won't give him time," she continued, "they must take the consequences. Blood cannot be got of stone nor money out of Micawber in his present condition."

One dirty-faced man, a boot-maker I think, would put his

head in at the front door at seven o'clock every morning and shout, "Come on, Mr Micawber, pay up, will you? Don't hide you face, but pay my bill!" And receiving no answer he would shout angrily, "Robbers!" and disappear.

At such times Mr Micawber would walk up and down the room and wave his arms in despair. On one such occasion he had even frightened me saying that he would commit suicide. Yet half an hour later I had seen him polish up his shoes with great care and go out, humming a lively tune as if he had not a care in the world.

I found that Mrs Micawber regained her spirits in just the same way. At three o'clock one day, she received a notice for payment of tax and fainted straightway. Yet at four o'clock she was able to make a hearty meal (this meal was bought by sending two teaspoons to the pawnbroker's)

In this house and with his family, I passed my leisure time. Mr breakfast was a penny loaf of bread and a penny worth of milk. My dinner was again a small loaf but with a little bit of cheese. I was out at the warehouse all day and had to support myself on six shillings all week. From Monday morning till Sunday night, I had no advice, no encouragement, no help, no support of any kind from anyone. I was insufficiently and unsatisfactorily fed. But for the mercy of God, I might easily have become a little robber or a little vagabond.

I never told anyone in the warehouse how I came to be there or gave the least sign of my unhappiness. How much I suffered is beyond my powers to say. But I did my work well. In a few weeks I was as good as any of the other boys in cleaning and labelling the bottles. I gave up all hopes of escape from such a station in life.

pawnbroker: a person who lends money in exchange for articles left with him

vagabond: a person who wanders from place to place and leads an idle life

10 I form a great resolution

In my loneliness I got quite fond of the Micawbers. A strange friendship developed between them and me in spite of the difference in age between us.

"Master Copperfield," said Mrs Micawber one day, "Mr Micawber's difficulties are coming to a crisis. There's nothing to eat in the house!"

"Dear me!" I said. It was Wednesday night and I had two shillings in my pocket. I took them out and begged Mrs Micawber to receive them as a loan. But that good lady kissed me and made me put them back in my pocket.

"No, my dear Master Copperfield," said Mrs Micawber, "I can't think of doing it. But you can help me in another way. I've already parted with many of the things in the house. There are a few more that we could part with. I know that it would give great pain to my Papa and Mama if they saw me sending away these articles to the pawnbroker's." I understood what she meant and asked her to make use of me.

At last Mr Micawber's difficulties came to a crisis and he was arrested one morning and taken to the debtor's prison. On the Sunday after he was taken there he wanted me to go and see him and dine with him. After a few days the furniture in the house was taken away to pay up the bills. Mrs Micawber decided that it would be better for her to take the children and join Mr Micawber in prison. Before doing so, the good lady arranged a new lodging for me. It was near the prison and I could often visit the Micaw-

debtor's prison: a prison where people who could not pay the money they owed, were sent

bers in the evenings. I used to walk up and down the yard with Mr Micawber, or play cards with his wife and listen to her stories of her Papa and Mama.

These worthy parents of hers had rescued Mr Micawber from jail on three or four occasions but were now dead. But it made me happy to hear that some of Mrs Micawber's other relatives were now coming to their rescue; so there was some hope of Mr Micawber gaining his liberty. One evening when I went to the prison I heard to my great joy that he was going to be set free the next day.

Mr Micawber walked with me to my lodging that night and parted from me with a blessing. When I lay in bed sleepless, I thought of the Micawbers leaving London and of the parting between us that was near at hand. Slowly some decision was taking shape within me. There was not hope of any escape from it, unless the escape was my own doing. I decided I could not go on like this. I decided to run away. Mr Micawber came down to the counting-house, one afternoon, to tell Mr Quinion that he would be leaving. Mr Quinion called in Tipp, one of the workmen there who had a room to let. Mr Quinion told me that I could shift to Tipp's. I said nothing. I had made up my mind to run away.

I passed my evenings with Mr and Mrs Micawber and I think we became fonder of one another as time went on. Next morning I went to begin my weary day at Murdstone and Grinby's warehouse. But I did not mean to pass any more weary days there. No, I had made up my mind to run away—to go, by some means or other, to the only relation I had in the world, and tell my story to my aunt, Miss Betsey.

I do not know how this desperate idea came into my mind. But, once there, it remained there. Not that I believed there was anything hopeful in it, but I had made up my mind to carry it out. I had many times gone over that old

story my poor mother had told me about my birth. My aunt walked into the story and out of it—a person to be feared. But there was one little quality in her behaviour towards my mother which gave me a little shadow of encouragement.

As I did not even know where Miss Betsey lived, I wrote a letter to Peggotty, and asked her if she remembered. I had also asked Peggotty in my letter if she could give me a half-guinea as a loan. Peggotty's answer came soon. She had enclosed the half-guinea and told me that Miss Betsey lived near Dover but that was all she could say.

My weekly wages were given to me in advance. I did not want to owe a penny to Murdstone and Grinby's. So I worked till Saturday night. I said I was going and that I had to move my box to my new lodging at Tipp's and I ran away.

On the way to my lodging, I saw a young man in a donkey-cart. I asked him whether he would move my box and take it to the Dover coach office for sixpence. He nodded and whipped up his donkey. He came up to my room and carried my box down. I asked him to wait for me down the road.

The words were no sooner out of my mouth than he rattled away. I was quite out of breath when I caught up with him near the coach office. Suddenly, my half-guinea tumbled out of my pocket. I put it in my mouth for safety when I received a violent chuck under the chin from the young man. I saw my half-guinea fly out of my mouth into his hand.

"Hey!" he cried, seizing me by the collar, "this looks like a police case to me. You've stolen money and you're trying to run away, are you?"

half-guinea: old British coin worth half a guinea. A guinea was a gold coin worth twenty-one shillings

"Give my money back!" I said, very frightened. "And let go of me."

"Come to the police," he replied, "and prove the money's yours," he said, dragging me to the cart. Suddenly, however, he changed his mind. With a jerk he let go off me and jumped into the cart, then whipped the donkey madly. I ran after him as fast as I could. Now I lost him, now I saw him, now I lost him. At last I stood still and watched him go out of sight. But soon I was struck by the fear that half of London's police would be after me. I turned and began to run, panting and running but never stopping, towards Greenwich. I was told that this was on the Dover Road.

I would have run a mile or so when I sat down to rest on a doorstop in the Kent Road. It was the loss of the half-guinea that upset me most, for I had counted on it to feed me on my journey to Dover in search of Aunt Betsey. But miserable though I was, I had no thought of going back.

11 I reach Dover

I began to walk again. I passed a little shop, where it was written: 'The best prices given for old clothes.' I could sell my waistcoat, I thought, and buy some food for myself.

I went into a side street, took off my waistcoat and rolling it neatly under my arm walked back towards the shop.

"If you please, sir," I said to the owner of the shop, "I'd like to sell this for a fair price."

He took the waistcoat, went into the shop, held it up against the light and said, "What price do you name, for this little waistcoat?"

"Would eighteenpence be about right, sir?" I said.

"I won't give more than ninepence for it." I said ninepence, if he pleased. He gave the money, after much grumbling.

It was night now, I found a haystack by the side of the road and climbed to the top and lay down. Never shall I forget the lonely feeling of first lying down, without a roof above my head! In the morning I felt the warm rays of the sun on me. I got up and was soon on the dusty road to Dover. As evening came I was over the bridge at Rochester, footsore and tired. I lay down and ate the bread I had bought for supper.

I woke up with the beating of drums and marching of troops, quite dazed. I stood up and felt my legs stiff. If I had to keep myself fit for the rest of my journey, I should sell my jacket and get some food. I found a shop at the corner of a dirty lane.

Into this shop, which was low and small, I went. Suddenly an ugly old man with very red eyes and a grisly beard

and smelling of rum, came up to me and caught me by the hair.

"Oh, what do you want?" said he, showing his teeth in a terrible smile. "Oh, my eyes and limbs, goroo, goroo!"

"I wanted to know," I said slowly, trembling, "if you'd buy a jacket."

"Oh, my liver!" cried the old man, throwing the jacket on the shelf, "Get out of the shop—goroo!—don't ask for money—make it an exchange!"

I told him humbly that I wanted money, and that nothing else was of any use to me. He said he did not have it with him then. I said I would wait for it. He came out many times and tried to make me agree to an exchange. At last he began to pay me in halfpence at a time, and it was no many hours before it got to eighteenpence.

The sun had set now and I left the place. I spent threepence on food and drink. My bed at night was another haystack. Next morning I took the road again. Through all my troubles on my journey there was one thing that gave me comfort: my mind's picture of my mother in her youth and beauty sitting by the fire. When I came upon the bare, open, rolling ground near Dover, there was some hope in my heart. But when I actually set foot in the town itself on the sixth day of my flight, and stood on a pavement, all hope left me.

I asked about my aunt among the boatmen first and received various answers. One said she was locked up in jail for child-stealing; another that she was seen riding on a broom. By now it was afternoon and I was sitting on the step of an empty shop at a street corner. Just then a coachman, coming by with his carriage, dropped a horse-cloth. As I handed it up, I saw the coachman's face was a kind one and asked him if he knew where Miss Trotwood lived.

"Trotwood," said he, "Let me see. Old lady? With a very

straight back?" said he making himself upright, "and with a very sharp voice and manner?". My heart sank within me as I nodded at the true description of the lady. "I tell you what," said he, pointing with his whip to the high ground on the right, "If you go up there, and keep right on till you come to some houses facing the sea, you'll hear of her."

I thanked him and went in the direction. Soon I came to a shop and said to the shopkeeper, "Will you have the goodness to tell me where Miss Trotwood lives?" He was weighing some rice for a young woman, who turned round quickly when she heard the name.

"My mistress?" she said. "What do you want, boy?"

"I want," I replied, "to speak to her, if you please."

The young woman told me that she was going to Miss Trotwood's house herself and I could follow her. I followed her and we came to a small cottage with cheerful bow-windows; in front of it there was a stone path and a garden full of flowers.

"This is Miss Trotwood's house," she said and hurried into the house and left me standing at the garden-gate.

I looked down at myself. My shoes had lost their shape and the leather had come off in many places. My hat was crushed and bent. My shirt and trousers were torn and dirty with heat.

It was very silent at the living-room window. So she was not there. I lifted my eyes to the window above it, where I saw a red-faced, pleasant looking gentleman; he screwed up one eye in a funny manner, nodded his head at me a number of times, laughed and went away. At that moment there came out of the house a lady with her handkerchief tied over her cap and a pair of gardening gloves on her

bow-window: a window usually with glass on three sides, jutting out from an outside wall

hand. She carried a great knife in her hand. I knew her at once to be Miss Betsey, for she came out of the house exactly as my mother had so often described her.

"Go away!" said Miss Betsey, shaking her head. "Go away! No boys here!"

I watched her, with my heart at my lips, as she walked to the corner of the garden, and bent to dig up some root there. Then, without any courage at all but with a great deal of desperation, I went softly in and stood beside her.

I touched her with my finger and began saying, "If you please, ma'am."

She stared and looked up.

"If you please, Aunt."

"Eh?" exclaimed Miss Betsey, in a tone of great surprise.

"If you please, Aunt, I'm your nephew."

"Oh Lord!" said my aunt and sat down on the garden path.

"I'm David Copperfield, of Blunderstone, in Suffolk—You had come there on the night when I was born, and saw my dear Mama. I've been very unhappy since she died. I've been neglected, taught nothing and put to work. It made me run away to you. I was robbed when I first set out. I've walked all the way from London and have never slept in a bed since I began my journey." Here my self-support gave away and I broke down.

My aunt sat on the ground, staring at me until I began to sob; then she got up suddenly and took me into her living-room, holding me by the collar. She opened a tall cupboard, took out a bottle and made me drink something. As I was still unable to control my sobs, she put me on the sofa and then, seating herself by the window, exclaimed every now and then, "Mercy on us!"

After a while she rang the bell.

"Janet," said my aunt, when her servant came in. "Go

upstairs, give my compliments to Mr Dick, and say I'd like to speak to him."

My aunt, with her hands behind her, walked up and down the room, until the gentleman who had winked at me from the upper window came in laughing.

"Mr Dick," said my aunt, "don't be a fool because you can be wiser than anyone, when you want to be. You've heard me talk of David Copperfield. Now, don't pretend that you don't remember, because I know better."

"David Copperfield?" said Mr Dick, who appeared to me not to remember much about it. "David Copperfield? Oh yes!"

"Well, this is his son," continued my aunt, "he has run away. Now, here you see young David Copperfield. What shall I do with him?"

"What shall I do with him?" said Mr Dick scratching his head.

"Oh! do with him? Why, if I was you," said Mr Dick looking at me, "I should—" and suddenly brightening up, he added quickly, "I should wash him."

"Janet," said my aunt, turning round with a happy look, "Mr Dick sets us all right. Heat the bath!"

Janet had gone away to get the bath ready when my aunt, to my great alarm, suddenly became stiff and cried out, "Janet, donkeys!"

Janet came running down as if the house was on fire. She ran to a little piece of grass in front, and sent off two donkeys with their women riders that dared to set foot there. By now my aunt had rushed past the gate and boxed the ears of the boy who was leading the third animal.

The bath was a great comfort. I could hardly keep myself awake. They now made me wear Mr Dick's shirt and his pair of trousers, and tied me up in two or three blankets.

I lay down on a sofa and fell asleep.

In the evening, we sat at the table for dinner. I wondered what my aunt was going to do with me. She ate her dinner in silence, except when she looked at me now and then and exclaimed, "Mercy upon us!"

After dinner we had sherry and my aunt requested Mr Dick to listen to my story, which she made me tell, gradually, by a number of questions.

"Now Mr Dick," said my aunt, again with a serious look, "I'm going to ask you another question. Look at this child. What would you do with him now?"

"Do with David's son?" said Mr Dick. "Oh!" said Mr Dick again. "Yes. Do with—I should put him to bed."

"Janet!" cried my aunt, again with a bright look in her eyes. "Mr Dick sets us all right. If the bed is ready, we'll take him up to it."

The room with a warm fire in it was a pleasant one at the top of the house, overlooking the sea, on which the moon shone brightly. As I turned from the window, I was filled with gratitude when I saw the white-curtained bed. How I called to my memory all the lonely places under the night sky where I had slept!

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12 My aunt makes up her mind about me

On going down in the morning, I found my aunt at the breakfast table, deep in thought. I knew she was thinking of me and felt very anxious about what she was going to do with me.

"Hallo!" said my aunt suddenly. "I've written to your stepfather, and I'm waiting for an answer."

"Will I—be—given up to him?" I trembled.

"I don't know," said my aunt. "We'll see."

All my hopes sank under these words and my heart grew heavy. My aunt cleared the table and sat down with some needlework.

"Will you go upstairs," said my aunt threading the needle, "and give my compliments to Mr Dick? Tell him I'll be glad to know how he's getting on with his Memorial. He's writing it to the Lord Chancellor, or Lord Somebody or other about himself."

I got up with great readiness to give this message. I found Mr Dick working at his Memorial with a long pen, his head almost laid upon the paper. There was a large paper kite in a corner, bundles of paper, a number of pens and a quantity of ink.

"Ha! Phoebus!" said Mr Dick, when he saw me. "How does the world go? I'll tell you what," he added, in a lower tone. He signed to me to come closer and putting his lips close to my ear said: "Don't tell anyone this, it's a mad world."

Phoebus: the sun god in Greek mythology

He then took a pinch of snuff and laughed heartily.

I gave my message.

"Well," said Mr Dick in answer, "my compliments to her and I think I've made a start." He threw a doubtful look at his work and asked me, "On what day did King Charles the First have his head cut off?"

I said, "In the year sixteen hundred and forty-nine."

"Well," returned Mr Dick, scratching his ear with his pen, "that's what the books say, but I don't see how it can be right. I'll tell you why: If it happened so long ago, how did the people about the king manage to put some of the trouble out of his head, after it had been cut off, into mine?"

I was very much surprised by this question but could give no answer.

When I went downstairs I told my aunt that Mr Dick sent her his compliments and was getting on very well indeed with his Memorial.

"What do you think of him?" asked my aunt.

"Is he—is Mr Dick—is he out of his mind?"

"Not a bit," said my aunt in a sharp voice.

She then explained to me that Mr Dick was a distant relative of hers, that he was left by his father in the care of his elder brother who wanted to shut him up in an asylum.

"And so I stepped in," said my aunt and made him an offer. I said, "Your brother's not mad. Let him have his little income, and come and live with me. I'll take care of him." After a good deal of fighting I got him, and he's been here ever since.

When I learned how my aunt had taken in poor, harmless Mr Dick, I began to have some hopes for myself. A reply

from Mr Murdstone to my aunt's letter was awaited. I passed the time in great anxiety but I tried not to show it.

One afternoon my aunt sat by the window and I sat by her. She was a little more stiff and a little more serious than usual. My aunt had ordered Janet to lay the table. Suddenly she gave an alarm of donkeys. I looked out and to my great surprise, I saw Miss Murdstone, riding on a donkey, and step over that sacred piece of grass in front of the gate.

"Go along!" cried my aunt, shaking her head and her fist at her from the window, "Go away! Oh, you bold-faced thing!"

The coolness with which Miss Murdstone looked about her made my aunt so angry that she did not rush out as she always was in the habit of doing at such times. I took this opportunity to tell her who it was on the donkey; I also said that the gentleman coming behind was Mr Murdstone himself.

"I don't care who it is!" cried my aunt, still shaking her head. "I won't allow it. Go away! Janet, turn them round. Lead him off!" From where I sat I saw Janet pulling the donkey from behind, Mr Murdstone leading him ahead and the donkey himself planted in the ground with his legs in different directions, refusing to move, while Miss Murdstone struck at Janet with her parasol. Several boys who had come upon the scene of action, shouted loudly. My aunt suddenly spotting the owner of the donkey—a lad of thirteen—rushed out, caught hold of him, dragged him into the garden and called to Janet to hand him over to the police. The lad being a clever fellow, pretended to fall in a faint, quickly got to his feet and ran away taking his donkey with him.

parasol: a light umbrella used to shield against the sun

In the meantime Miss Murdstone had got off her donkey and was now waiting with her brother at the bottom of the steps to be received. My aunt walked past them into the house.

"Shall I go away, Aunt?" I asked trembling.

"Certainly not!" she said and pushed me into a corner near her and put a chair in front of me.

"I don't allow anybody to ride over that piece of grass.

"This rule is inconvenient to strangers," Miss Murdstone said.

"Is it?" said my aunt.

Mr Murdstone was afraid of a quarrel and so began: "Miss Trotwood—."

"Oh, you're the Mr Murdstone who married the widow of my late nephew, David Copperfield of Blunderstone Rookery!" said my aunt.

"I am," said Mr Murdstone.

"You'll excuse my saying, sir," returned my aunt, "that I wish you had left the poor child alone."

"I agree with what Miss Trotwood has said about Clara," said Miss Murdstone. "Our late Clara was in every way, a mere child."

"Janet," said my aunt, ringing the bell and not paying any attention to what Miss Murdstone said. "My compliments to Mr Dick, please ask him to come down." And until he came, my aunt sat perfectly straight and stiff, staring at the wall. When he came, my aunt introduced him to them.

"Madam," said Mr Murdstone, "on the receipt of your letter I thought out of respect for you, I should visit you in person."

"Thank you," said my aunt, looking sharply at him.

"This unhappy boy," continued Mr Murdstone, "has run away from his friends and occupation—."

"Whose appearance," said his sister, looking at me, "is disgraceful."

"He has been," went on Mr Murdstone, "the cause of much trouble and worry, both during the time of my late dear wife and after. He has a rebellious spirit and a violent temper. Both my sister and myself have tried to correct his faults, but with no success. And we have felt—that you should know this about the boy."

"Of all the boys in the world, this is the worst boy," said his sister.

"Strong!" said my aunt, shortly.

"But not at all strong for the facts," returned Miss Murdstone.

"Ha!" said my aunt. "Well, sir?"

"I have my opinions about the best way of bringing up," continued Mr Murdstone whose face darkened more and more as he went on. "My methods depend on what I know of the boy and what my finances are. I thought it best to place the boy in a respectable business, under the care of a friend of mine. But he ran away from his work, making himself a vagabond, running about the country, and finally, he came to appeal to you, Miss Trotwood. I'd like to warn you of what will happen if you decide to help him."

"But about the respectable business first," said my aunt. "If he'd been your own boy, would you have put him into it?"

"If he was my brother's own boy," said Miss Murdstone, "his character would be different."

"What about the house, the Rookery?" my aunt asked.

"It was left to his mother, unconditionally, by her first husband."

"Of course it was left unconditionally. But when she married again—did not the mother leave it to her son?"asked my aunt.

"My late wife loved her second husband, ma'am," said Mr Murdstone, "and put all her trust in him."

"Your late wife was an inexperienced and unfortunate baby," returned my aunt, shaking her head at him. "And what have you to say next?"

"Just this, Miss Trotwood," he returned, his face black with anger. "I'm here to take David back and deal with him as I think I should. But if you help him now you keep him forever, and my doors are closed to him."

My aunt listened to this with great attention and a serious face with her hands folded on one knee.

"And what does he say?" said my aunt. "Are you ready to go, David?"

I answered, "No," and begged her not to let me go.

"Neither Mr Murdstone nor Miss Murdstone had ever liked me. They made my Mama unhappy about me. Oh please, Aunt, for my father's sake, do not send me away to them!"

"Mr Dick," said my aunt, "what shall I do with this child?" Mr Dick thought, hesitated, brightened and then replied, "Have him measured for a suit of clothes directly."

"Mr Dick," said my aunt happily, "give me your hand, for your common sense is wonderful!"

She pulled me towards her and said to Mr Murdstone: "You can go when you like; I'll take my chance with the boy. If he's as bad as you say he is, I can at least do with him as you've done. But I don't believe a word of what

you said."

Mr Murdstone shrugged his shoulders as he rose.

"Do you think I don't understand," my aunt went on, "what a life you made his poor mother lead? You must have deceived the poor innocent creature with your cunning ways and made her agree to marry you."

Mr Murdstone was now standing by the door with a smile on his face, but with his thick black eyebrows heavily drawn together.

"Good day, sir," said my aunt, "and good-bye! Good day to you, ma'am," said she turning suddenly upon his sister. "Don't ride on my patch of green again!"

Slowly the anger went out of my aunt's face. Soon it became so pleasant that I picked up enough courage to throw my arms round her neck and kiss her and thank her. I then shook hands with Mr Dick and he shook hands with me a number of times and laughed.

"We'll jointly be the guardians of the child, Mr Dick," said my aunt.

I shall be delighted to be the guardian of David's son!"

"Very good," returned my aunt. "Do you know, I've been thinking of calling him Trotwood Copperfield?"

"Yes, certainly. David's son, Trotwood Copperfield," said Mr Dick.

Thus I began my new life, in a new name, with new clothes (with Trotwood Copperfield on them) and everything new about me. Now all my doubts and fears were set at rest. I felt, for many days, like one in a dream. My life at Blunderstone and that at Murdstone and Grinby's were things of the past and seemed far away from me.

13 I make another beginning

Mr Dick and I soon became the best of friends and very often in the afternoons went out to fly the great kite. Every day of his life he worked for many hours at the Memorial, which however, never made any progress.

My aunt's affection and kindness for me increased day by day. Soon she shortened my adopted name of Trotwood into Trot.

"Trot," said my aunt one evening after tea, "I want you to go to school at Canterbury. Janet, hire the grey pony and chaise tomorrow morning at ten o'clock, and pack up Master Trotwood's clothes tonight."

The next morning my aunt drove the grey pony in a masterly manner, sitting high and stiff like a coachman. When we came to the country road, she looked down at me by her side, and asked me whether I was happy and patted me on the head with her whip, when I said, "Very happy indeed."

"Is it a large school, aunt?" I asked.

"I don't know, we're going to Mr Wickfield's first."

We reached Canterbury and drove through its roads. At last we stopped before a very old house, bulging out over the road; a house with long bow-windows bulging out still further. It was a very clean house, and the old-fashioned brass knocker on the low arched door shone brightly.

When the pony-chaise stopped at the door, a pale thin face appeared at a small window on the ground floor and

chaise: a light, open carriage for one or two people to travel in

then disappeared. The low arched door then opened and the face appeared again. It belonged to a red-haired person—a young man who had red-brown eyes, hardly any eyebrows and no eyelashes. He had high shoulders and was very bony.

"Is Mr Wickfield at home, Uriah Heep?" asked my aunt.

"Mr Wickfield's at home, ma'am," said Uriah Heep, "if you'll please walk in there," pointing with his long bony hand to the room.

We went into the living-room and waited there. I was looking at the pictures on the wall when a gentleman with grey hair and black eyebrows came in.

"Miss Betsey Trotwood," said the gentleman, "pray walk into my room."

Miss Betsey thanked him and we went into the room.

"Well, Miss Trotwood," said Mr Wickfield, "what kind of wind blows you here?"

I now found that he was a lawyer. Mr Wickfield had a handsome, pleasant face but the redness of it made me think (and this I learnt from Peggotty) that he had a great liking for port wine. He was very cleanly dressed in a blue coat and striped waistcoat.

"This is my nephew," said my aunt. "I've adopted him. I've brought him here to put him to school where he may be well taught and well treated."

"Dr Strong's is a good school," said Mr Wickfield, "but your nephew can't board there, just now."

"But he can board somewhere else, I suppose?" suggested my aunt. My aunt and Mr Wickfield went on an inspection of the schools and the boarding-houses in the town. When they came back I found that my aunt was not satisfied with any of the boarding-houses she had seen.

"I'll tell you what you can do, Miss Trotwood," said Mr Wickfield. "Leave your nephew here, for the present. The house is very quiet and suited for study. Leave him here."

"Come, Miss Trotwood," said Mr Wickfield again. "Please don't hesitate. It's only a temporary arrangement and if he or you don't like to continue, he can move into some other place later. You can pay for his stay, if you like—if that'll make you agree to the offer."

"On that understanding," said my aunt, "I'll be very glad to leave him here, though I'll still be in your debt for your kindness."

"Then come and see my little housekeeper," said Mr Wickfield. We went up a beautiful old staircase and into a dark old room lighted by three or four windows, I had seen from the street.

Mr Wickfield tapped at the door of a room and a girl of about my own age came quickly out and kissed him; she had a bright, happy and quiet face. This was his little housekeeper, his daughter Agnes, Mr Wickfield said.

She listened to her father with a pleasant face as he told her about me. She said to my aunt that we should go to my room, and we went up the staircase again. It was a lovely room with more oak beams, and the windows had diamond-shaped panes.

My aunt was as happy as I was with the arrangement made for me and we went down to the living-room again. "Trot," said my aunt, as she was taking leave of me "be a credit to yourself, to me, and to Mr Dick and Heaven be with you!"

I was greatly overcome, and could only thank her again and again, and send my love to Mr Dick.

"The pony's at the door," said my aunt, "and I'm off. Stay here," With these words, she hugged me for a moment

14 Uriah Heep

A few days after I came to stay at Mr Wickfield's house I saw a light in the office late one night and found Uriah Heep reading a fat book.

"You're working late tonight, Uriah," I said. "I suppose you know a good deal about law?"

"Me, Master Copperfield? Oh, no! I know quite well that I'm the humblest person in the world," said Uriah Heep. "And my mother is likewise a very humble person." He had a habit of squeezing his hands and wiping them in a stealthy way.

"Mr Wickfield is a most excellent man, Master Copperfield," continued Uriah. "Have you known him long?" I said I had not known him for long though he was a friend of my aunt.

"Oh, indeed, Master Copperfield," said Uriah, "your aunt is a sweet lady. She has great admiration for Miss Agnes. And I'm sure you have too, Master Copperfield."

"Everybody must have," I replied.

"Oh, thank you, Master Copperfield," said Uriah, "for what you said! Humble as I am, I know it's so true!" And he twisted his limbs more.

"If you'll come and take a cup of tea at our humble house," he said," Mother will be pleased and be proud to have your company." I said I would be glad to come.

I have not said anything about Peggotty. I wrote regularly to her from the time I came to stay with my aunt. I sent her a half-guinea out of the money Mr Dick had given me. She said that Mr Barkis was an excellent husband

though he was something of a miser. Mr Peggotty, Ham, Emily and Mrs Gummidge were all well.

One Thursday morning, I met Uriah in the street. He reminded me of my promise and asked me to have tea at his house that evening. I really had no wish to go but I did not want him to think that I was proud. Having taken Mr Wickfield's permission I walked down the street with Uriah towards his house in the evening. The room was very neat and clean but I did not find it very comfortable.

"This is a day to be remembered, my Uriah," said Mrs Heep, making the tea, "when Master Copperfield pays us a visit. My Uriah has looked forward to this. He had his fears that our humbleness stood in the way. Humble as we are, humble we've been and humble we'll always be!"

They began to talk about aunts and I told them about mine; then about parents and I told them about mine; then Mrs Heep talked about stepfathers and I was going to tell about mine—but stopped because my aunt had advised me to be silent on that subject. They got out of me many things I had no right to tell.

They talked about Mr Wickfield, the wine he took and what a pity it was he took so much. They asked me about Agnes and about our domestic life after dinner.

I was beginning to feel a little uncomfortable and was wondering whether I should take leave of them, when a figure passed the door—the door had stood open to let air into the room—came back again, looked in, walked in, and exclaimed loudly, "Copperfield! Is it possible!"

It was Mr Micawber! "This is indeed a most extraordinary meeting!" said he. "Walking along the street, wondering if something will turn up, I find someone who's connected with the most eventful period of my life—in short, I find a young and valued friend turn up. Copperfield, my dear fellow, how are you?"

I shook hands with him heartily, and introduced him to Uriah Heep and his mother. I was very anxious to get Mr Micawber away from Uriah Heep's house. "Shall we go and see Mrs Micawber, sir?" I said.

"If you'll do her that favour, Copperfield," replied Mr Micawber and turned towards the door. "Mr Heep! Good evening, Mrs Heep! Good evening!"

It was a little inn where the Micawbers was staying. Mrs Micawber was surprised but glad to see me. Mr Micawber left us and went out on some business. I went to the hotel the next day at four o'clock; I was surprised to hear from Mr Micawber that he had been to Uriah's house again and that he admired him very much. I was uncomfortable about it and often thought about it afterwards. Mr Micawber was uncommonly merry that evening. Next morning I received the following letter, dated half past nine in the evening:

"My Dear Young Friend,

There is no hope of help coming from London. I have given it in writing with the address of my residence at Pentonville, that I would pay the hotel charges fourteen days from now. When that date comes, the payment will not be made. The result is destruction. The bolt threatens, and the tree must fall.

This is the last letter, my dear Copperfield, you will ever receive.

From

The Beggared Outcast

Wilkins Micawber"

I ran off directly towards the hotel to say a word of comfort to Mr Micawber. But halfway there, I met the London coach with Mr and Mrs Micawber sitting up behind. As they did not see me, I thought it best not to see them. I turned into a side street feeling glad that they were gone.

15 I look about me

My school days drew to an end. I had been very happy at Dr Strong's. I did well in my studies and I was sorry to leave. At the same time the idea that I would be a young man filled me with excitement. My aunt and I talked about what I should do after I left school. I could not find an answer to her question: "What would you like to be?"

"Trot," said my aunt, "I think you ought to have a little change. A little look at life outside may help you to know your own mind. Would you like to go into the country and see your old nurse?"

"Of all the things in the world, Aunt, I should like it best!"

My aunt said I should spend a few days in London and was free to do what I liked for three or four weeks. I went to Canterbury first. Agnes was very glad to see me and told me that the house was not the same after I had left it.

"I don't feel the same either, since I left your house," I said. "I seem to miss my right hand. Everyone is guided by you, Agnes." Agnes laughed, and lifting up her eyes to mine she said: "Trotwood, there's something I want to ask you. Have you noticed any change in Papa?"

"Well," I answered, "I think he does himself no good by drinking so much." There were tears in her eyes. "His hand trembles, his speech is not plain, and his eyes look wild; and at such times, when he's so different from his usual self, he's wanted on business."

"By Uriah," said Agnes.

"Yes; and being in a state unfit for business, it troubles him more and the next day he drinks more. One evening, last week he—"

Her hands passed softly before my lips and in a moment she met her father at the door of the room. There was deep fondness for him and gratitude for all his love and care on her beautiful face. And when she looked at me, I felt that she was appealing to me not to be unkind to him even in my thoughts. But morning brought with it my parting from the old house, which Agnes filled with her influence. I felt pain in leaving it.

We stopped at a hotel in Charing Cross. A waiter showed me to my room. After dinner, I went to the play, *Julius Caesar,* at Covent Garden Theatre. The effect of the play, the influence of poetry, the lights and the music were so dazzling that when I came out into the street at midnight, I felt as if I had come from the clouds. I sat in the coffee-room watching the fire, when the figure of a well-formed young man went by me. I got up to go to bed and passed the person who had come in. I turned, came back and looked again. He did not know me, but I knew him in a moment. My old love for him came to me in such a flood that I went up to him at once, with a fast-beating heart and said: "Steerforth! Won't you speak to me?"

"My God!" he suddenly exclaimed. "It's little Copperfield!"

"My dear Steerforth, I'm overjoyed to see you!"

"And I'm rejoiced to see you, too!" he said, shaking hands heartily. "Why, Copperfield, old boy, don't be so overcome!"

"I brushed away the tears and began laughing. I told him that I had been adopted by my aunt who lived at Dover and that I had finished my education at Canterbury. How do you come to be here, Steerforth?"

"Well I'm an Oxford man," he replied, "that's to say, I get bored to death down there periodically, and so I'm now on my way to my mother's. You're devilishly handsome, Copperfield. Just what you used to be!" He laughed as he

Covent Garden Theatre: theatre house in the former central London fruit and vegetable market

ran his hand through the thick curls on his head and said, "My mother lives a little way out of the town, and the roads being in bad condition, I wanted to stop here for the night instead of going on." At breakfast Steerforth said that I should go home with him to Highgate and stay for a day or two.

It was evening when the stage-coach stopped before an old beautiful brick house at Highgate on the top of the hill. A handsome lady was in the doorway as we stepped down, and greeting Steerforth as "My dearest James," folded him in her arms. He introduced his mother and she welcomed me.

From the windows of my room I saw all London lying in the distance like a great vapour, with lights twinkling through it. I had only time to dress when I was called down to dinner. There was a second lady in the dining-room, of a slightly shorter figure and good looks. She was introduced as Miss Dartle. She was, I heard later, Steerforth's cousin and Mrs Steerforth's companion.

"It was at Mr Creakle's my son tells me, that you first knew each other," said Mrs Steerforth.

"He was very generous and noble to me in those days, ma'am," said I, "and I was in need of such a friend then."

"He's always very generous and noble," said Mrs Steerforth, proudly.

After dinner, Steerforth and Miss Dartle played a game of dice while Mrs Steerforth talked to me. When Mrs Steerforth spoke to me about my going down to Suffolk, I said how happy I would be if Steerforth went with me. I turned to him and said that I was going to see my old

companion: a person who is employed to live as a friend, usually by the rich

game of dice: a game played with a six-sided piece of wood differently marked on each side

nurse, and Mr Peggotty's family. I reminded him of the boatman who had come to see me at Salem House.

"Oh, yes!" said Steerforth. "It would be worth a journey to see that sort of people together and be one of them."

My heart leaped with a new hope of pleasure. But I had felt a little uncomfortable at Steerforth's tone when he spoke of 'that sort of people'. The next day Steerforth, who knew everything, gave me lessons in riding, fencing, and boxing. The week passed in a most delightful manner. He had a way of treating me—it was a familiar, affectionate manner that he used towards no one else.

* * *

Steerforth agreed to go with me and we reached the inn at Yarmouth at night. We planned to go to the boathouse in the evening and take Mr Peggotty's family by surprise. Steerforth asked me to go to Mr Barkis's house and said he would follow me later. The sun was bright and everything was fresh and lovely as I walked along. I reached Peggoty's house and knocked at the door. I smiled at her when she opened the door but she did not return the smile.

"Is Mr Barkis at home, madam?" I said, speaking in a rough voice.

"He's at home, sir," said Peggotty, "but he's in bed and not well."

"Doesn't he go over to Blunderstone?" I asked.

"When he's well he goes there," she answered. She looked at me more carefully now.

"Because, I want to ask you a question about a house there—the Rookery," said I.

She took a step backward, and put out her hands in an undecided, nervous way. I could hold back no longer.

"Peggotty!" I said.

fencing: a game of fighting with swords

"My darling boy!" she cried and we both burst into tears and were in each other's arms.

Oh, what laughing and crying there was! What pride she showed and what joy and what sorrow! I went upstairs with her and stood before Mr Barkis who was in bed with aches and pains. He said that he was very glad to see me and that it did him a lot of good to imagine that he was driving me down the Blunderstone road.

It was not long before Steerforth came. Peggotty had heard of him from me. Not only my praise of him, but his easy manner and good looks soon made him a favourite with Peggotty and Mr Barkis. It was eight o'clock when we left them and set out for Mr Peggotty's boathouse. It was a dark wintry night and the wind blew, making a mournful sound.

"The place looks gloomy," said Steerforth, "and the sea roars as if it were hungry for us."

We said no more as we came near the light on Mr Peggotty's window and made softly for the door. We heard a murmur of voices as we went in. Mr peggotty, his face beaming, held his arms wide open, Ham with a mixed expression of admiration and happiness was leading the blushing Emily to Mr Peggotty.

"Why, you two gentlemen—how you've grown! Em'ly, my darling, come here! Here's Master Davy and his friend. They come to see you on the brightest night of your life! There was a certain person," he continued, "who had known our Em'ly from the time she was a baby. He's not much of a person to look at—something like me, rough—but an honest fellow with his heart in the right place." Ham gave a broad grin. "What does this blessed fellow go and do? He loses that heart of his to our little Em'ly here. One evening, he takes hold of her hand, and joyfully cries to me, "Look here! This is to be my little wife!" And she says, half bold and half shy, "Yes, Uncle! If you please."

Then Mrs Gummidge claps her hands and you come in."

It was a touching sight—to see such a rough, strong fellow as Ham trembling in the strength of what he felt for the pretty little girl who had won his heart. Everybody was silent. But Steerforth, who could be the master of any situation, broke the silence and said, "Mr Peggotty, you're a thoroughly good fellow, and deserve to be as happy as you are tonight. Ham, I give you joy. Daisy, stir the fire, and make it a brisk one!"

Emily, indeed, said little all evening, but she looked and listened and her face grew lively and she became more charming. It was midnight when we took our leave. As they all stood crowded round the door, I saw the sweet blue eyes of Emily peeping after us, from behind Ham.

"A most charming little beauty!" said Steerforth, taking my arm. "Well! They're unusual company, and it's quite a new sensation."

"How lucky we are," I returned, "to have just come at the right time. How delightful to be the just sharers in their honest joy!"

"That's rather a chuckle-headed fellow for the girl, isn't he?" said Steerforth.

He had been so hearty with him, and with them all, that I felt a shock at this cold remark. But there was laughter in his eyes and the next moment he was singing gaily, as we walked at a brisk pace back to Yarmouth.

* * *

Steerforth and I stayed for more than a fortnight in that part of the country. I stayed at Peggotty's house while he stayed at the inn. We met every day and spent some time together but quite often we were away from one another. He was a good sailor and frequently went out boating with Mr Peggotty. I spent my time going to Blunderstone

chuckle-headed: stupid

and visiting the old familiar scenes of my childhood. One dark evening, when I returned from one of my visits, I found Steerforth alone in Mr Peggotty's house, before the fire, deeply absorbed in thought.

He gave a start when I put my hand upon his shoulder and said, almost angrily, "You come upon me like a spirit who would find fault with me! I was looking at pictures in the fire. I've been sitting here thinking that all the people who were so glad on the night of our arrival here might be scattered or come to some harm. Oh David, I wish to God I had a wise father to guide me these last twenty years!"

"My dear Steerforth, why, what's the matter?"

"Yes, it would be better to be this poor Peggotty, or his fool of a nephew," he said getting up and leaning against the chimney-piece, "than to be myself, twenty times richer and twenty times wiser!"

I was troubled and surprised by this change in him. "It's nothing, Davy, nothing!" he replied. He took my arm and said, "Let's have dinner, Davy, at the inn." He regained his good spirits as we went along. "See here who comes!" said Steerforth. " Little Em'ly, and that fellow with her. Upon my soul, he's a true knight. He never leaves her!"

Just then there passed—following them—the figure of a poorly dressed young woman.

"That's a black shadow following the girl," said Steerforth standing still. He spoke in a strange, low voice.

We had a good hot dinner.

"I've bought a boat that was for sale," said he. "Mr Peggotty will be the master of her in my absence. She must be newly painted and I shall leave Littimer my coachman, behind, to see to it. She shall have a new name."

"What name?" I asked.

"The Little Emily."

16 I choose my profession

That night when I came back to Mr Barkis's house, I was surprised to find Ham walking up and down in front of it.

"Em'ly is talking to a young woman," said Ham, "whom Em'ly knew once and should not know any more."

I thought of the figure following Ham and Emily, a few hours before.

"Em'ly, for Christ's sake," she said, "have a woman's heart towards me. I was once like you!" These were terrible words to hear, Mas'r Davy! It was Martha Endell, who was at school with her. Em'ly couldn't speak to her for her uncle was at home. So Em'ly asked her to meet her at her aunt's place.'

Peggotty came out and asked us to go in. The girl, young and fair, was seated on the floor leaning against a chair. Peggotty had been crying and Emily too.

"Martha wants," Emily said to Ham, "to go to London."

"No one knows me in London," said Martha. "I may do better there. I'll try, if you'll help me." Emily held out her hand to Ham and he put in it a little purse. Emily gave the money to Martha. Then Martha got up and gathering her shawl about her, went weeping to the door.

As the door closed, Emily hid her face in her hands and began to sob.

"Don't, Em'ly!" said Ham, patting her gently on the shoulder.

"Oh Ham!" she exclaimed, still weeping, "I'm not so good a girl as I should be! I wish you were fond of someone more worthy."

"Poor little tender heart," said Ham. "Martha has upset her."

Next morning Steerforth and I took leave of all our friends. When we came to London, Steerforth went home and I drove to the hotel where my aunt had taken lodgings for a week. We were happy to see each other.

After dinner, my aunt sat before the fire warming herself, while I made a glass of hot wine and water and cut a slice of toast into thin long strips.

"Well, Trot," she began, as she dipped a slice of toast into the wine and water, "would you like to be a lawyer?" I told her I would like it very much indeed, but I was uneasy about the money it would cost.

"Trot, my child, I want you well settled in life." She took my hand in hers and went on, "It's no use Trot, to recall the past, unless it has some influence upon the present. I wish I had been better friends with your poor father or with that poor child, your mother. When you came to me, a little run-away boy, all dusty and tired, perhaps I thought so. From that time till now, Trot, you've always been a credit to me and a pride and a pleasure."

I showed my gratitude for her affection and love by taking both her hands to my lips.

The next morning after breakfast we went to the office of Messrs Spenlow and Jorkins. There were four clerks at work in the office. Mr Spenlow was a small light-haired gentleman. He was buttoned trim and tight and had a very stiff shirt-collar. When he bowed to my aunt he could do it only from the waist.

"Mr Copperfield, I mentioned to Miss Trotwood the other day that there was a vacancy for an apprentice here and Miss Trotwood said she had a nephew in whom she was

apprentice: a person who works for an employer in order to learn the trade

greatly interested and wanted him to be a lawyer. That nephew, I believe, I now have the pleasure of ..." and he bowed again from the waist.

I bowed to him and said my aunt had told me of the vacancy.

It was settled that I could begin as soon as I could. My aunt arranged for my lodgings. They were furnished rooms on the top of a house with a view of the river from the windows. I was delighted with the place and my aunt settled the rent with Mrs Crupp, the housekeeper.

17 I fall in love and meet old friends

Days and weeks slipped by. I was getting on well in the office of Spenlow and Jorkins and qualifying myself for the profession of a lawyer. One day Mr Spenlow said that I should spend a weekend at his place in Norwood.

When the day arrived Mr Spenlow and I drove together to Norwood. When we reached the gate of the house, I saw that it had a lovely garden in front and was cheerfully lighted up.

"Where is Miss Dora?" said Mr Spenlow to the servant. "Dora!" I thought, "What a beautiful name!"

We turned into a room near at hand, and I heard a voice say, "Mr Copperfield, my daughter Dora, and my daughter Dora's friend and companion." It was Mr Spenlow's voice, but I hardly heard it. It did not matter to me whose voice it was. All that mattered to me was Dora. She was beautiful beyond words and in an instant I knew I was in love, hopelessly in love.

"I," said another voice which sounded familiar "have seen Mr Copperfield before." The speaker was Dora's friend and companion, Miss Murdstone! I do not think I was much astonished. Nothing in the world could astonish me except Dora. I said, "How do you do, Miss Murdstone?"

"Dora has no mother," he said. "I thought she should have a companion and Miss Murdstone was kind enough to become her companion and protector.

There were four people at the table besides me: an old gentleman, who was a friend of Mr Spenlow, Miss Murdstone, Mr Spenlow himself and his charming,

girlish, bright-eyed, lovely Dora. I hardly ate anything. I talked to her. She had the most delightful voice, the gayest little laugh.

The next day began with a fine morning and I went down to take a walk in the garden. The garden was cool, and I walked about, thinking what happiness it would be for me, if I ever got engaged to this dear little Dora. I had not walked for long, when I turned a corner and met her.

She laughed and the colour rose to her face. I never saw such pretty curls as hers. She removed her straw hat with blue ribbons and all her golden curls tumbled out. Her little dog Jip came running along and began to bark at me. She took him up in her arms and he grew quiet.

"Miss Murdstone is a tiresome creature," said Dora, pouting. "I can't tell how Papa ever made the mistake of choosing her as my companion. Who wants a protector? Jip can protect me a great deal better than Miss Murdstone—can't you Jip, dear?" Jip winked lazily, when she kissed his white ball of a head.

We had a quiet day: a walk, a family dinner and evening spent over books and pictures. The time came for me to leave Norwood. Mr Spenlow and I left in the morning. Dora was at the breakfast table to make tea. I had the sad pleasure of taking off my hat to her as she stood on the doorstep, with Jip in her arms.

I attended court, I tried to read; I could not put my mind on anything. I thought of Dora all the time. I did my work and went about my duties mechanically. Suddenly one day, my promise to Traddles that I would look him up, came to my mind and I set out. He lived in a little street at Camden Town which was not a very desirable part of London.

"You're reading for the bar, Mr Waterbrook told me," I said.

"Yes," said Traddles. "I'm fighting my way in the world against difficulties. You remember, I was brought up by an uncle. He died soon after I left school. A year before his death he married his housekeeper, and so I wasn't provided for. Yawler, my old classmate whose father is a lawyer, helped me and I began to earn some money by copying law writings. Later, I began to state the cases themselves. Yawler recommended me to a few good officers—Mr Waterbrook was one of them—and I got, and still get, a good many jobs. So little by little I managed to pay up the hundred pounds necessary to enter the bar. And now, Copperfield, I'm so pleased to see you that I won't hide anything. Therefore you must know that I'm engaged to be married!"

"Engaged! My dear Traddles!"

"Sophy's father isn't rich, but Sophy is the dearest girl on earth! I don't make much but I don't spend much. I board with the Micawbers who live downstairs and who are very pleasant company."

Before I could exclaim at this strange coincidence, there was a double knock at the door and Mr Micawber—not a bit changed— with his stick, his shirt collar and his eyeglass—came into the room. At first he did not know me, when I spoke to him, but seeing me smile, he looked at me closely, fell back, and cried, "Is it possible! have I the pleasure of again beholding Copperfield!" And he shook me by both hands.

The day came on which I was to entertain my newly found old friends. Mr Micawber arrived with more shirt-collar than usual, and a new ribbon to his eye-glass; Mrs Micawber with her cap in a brown paper parcel; and Traddles, supporting Mrs Micawber on his arm.

We drank to Traddles and Sophy's health. We drank to

enter the bar: become a barrister

Mr and Mrs Micawber's health. And when my turn came, I said D was my favourite letter. And they drank to D's health and mine. While Mrs Micawber went about handing the teacups after dinner, she asked me in a whisper whether D was fair or dark, or whether she was short or tall. After tea Mrs Micawber was good enough to sing to us.

It was past ten o'clock when Mrs Micawber rose to replace her cap in the brown paper parcel and put on her bonnet. Holding a candle over the stairs I lighted their way down and bid them goodnight. When I returned to my fireside I heard a quick step coming up the stairs. It was Steerforth.

"Why, Daisy, old boy," he laughed, "another feast!"

I told him about Mr and Mrs Micawber and asked him whether he remembered old Traddles of Salem House.

"Oh, Traddles!" said Steerforth, stirring the fire. 'Is he as soft as ever?" As I handed him the remains of roast mutton and pigeon-pie, he exclaimed, "Why Daisy, here's supper for a king! I shall do it justice, for I have come from Yarmouth."

"Oh! And how are they all? I asked. "Of course, Emily's not married yet?"

"Not yet. Going to be, I believe..." He began to feel his pockets. "I have a letter for you from your old nurse. Old Barkis is in a bad way, I hear." The letter was from Peggotty. It informed me of her husband's hopeless state.

"I'll go down and see her, Steerforth. It's not that I can do her any good but my presence will be a comfort to her. You've just come back," said I, "and it's no use asking you to go with me?"

"No," he returned, "I haven't seen my mother for a long time and I must go there. You're thinking of going tomorrow. Well then, don't go till next day. Come and stay

for a day with us. Come! Say yes."

I wrote a letter to Mr Spenlow asking for a short leave of absence and Steerforth and I set off towards Highgate.

Steerforth came to my room before going to bed to say good night.

"I'll be gone before you wake in the morning," I said. "Goodnight Steerforth!"

He was unwilling to go, and stood with a hand on each of my shoulders.

"Daisy," he said, smiling, "that's the name I like to call you by—and I wish, you could give it to me! Daisy, if anything should ever separate us," he said holding me by the hand, "you must think of me at my best!"

"Why Steerforth! You're always loved and cherished in my heart!" said I.

I was up early next morning and having dressed as quietly as I could, I looked into his room. He was fast asleep, lying easily with his head upon his arm, as I had often seen him lie at school.

And so I left him.

18 A loss and a greater loss

I reached Yarmouth in the evening and went into the inn. It was ten o'clock when I left the inn to go to Peggotty's house. My low tap at the door was answered by Mr Peggotty. Emily was seated by the fire, with her hands before her face. Ham was standing near her.

"Em'ly, my dear," said Mr Peggotty, "see, here's Mas'r Davy come! What, cheer up, pretty!"

I felt her hand cold when I touched it. She went to the other side of her uncle and clung to him, and neither lifted up her face nor spoke a word. Mr Peggotty sent Ham to the boathouse on some work. When Peggotty came down and saw me, she took me in her arms and said, "Bless you, what a comfort you are in my sorrow!" We then went upstairs. Mr Barkis was lying on his bed, half resting.

"Barkis my dear!" said Peggotty, bending over him, "Here's my dear boy, who brought us together."

He was silent and senseless.

"He's going with the tide," whispered Mr Peggotty to me behind his hand. We were standing by the foot of the bed and our eyes were dim.

"Mr Peggotty touched me and whispered to me with much awe and reverence. "They're both going very fast."

"Barkis, my dear!" said Peggotty.

"CP Barkis," he cried faintly. "No better woman anywhere!"

"Look! Here's Mas'r Day!' said Peggotty, as he now opened his eyes. He smiled at me pleasantly and said, 'Barkis is willing!"

And then he went out with the tide.

* * *

I stayed a day after the remains of the poor carrier had made their last journey. On the day of the funeral I walked over to the Blunderstone churchyard and put some flowers on my parents' graves.

We found Mr Barkis's will in an old box beside the bed. Peggotty was ready to go with me to London to see about the business of the will. We planned to meet in the boathouse that night. Emily was passing the day at a friend's house where she had been learning some dress-making, and Ham would bring her back in the evening. Mr Peggotty and his sister were already in the boathouse. I was to get my suitcase from the inn.

A dread falls on me here. I cannot bear to think of what did come, upon that night. It was a cold night, and rain was falling heavily; but there was a moon behind the clouds and it was not dark.

When I arrived at the boathouse it looked very warm and comfortable indeed. Mr Peggotty had smoked his pipe and supper was ready. Peggotty sat in her mourning dress by the fireside with her workbox near her. Mrs Gummidge appeared to be in low spirits in her corner and this seemed natural, too. Mr Peggotty welcomed me with a happy face.

After looking at Mrs Gummidge for some moments, Mr Peggotty glanced at the Dutch clock, got up, lighted the candle and put it on the window.

"There we are, Mrs Gummidge! lighted up according to custom. When my Em'ly sees the light at the window, she tells herself, "There's home and there's uncle waiting for me."

Peggotty looked up at him and said to him fondly, "You're a baby!"

"Well," returned her brother, standing with his legs wide apart. "I don't know about that. But I know that after she's married and gone, I'll put the candle at the window and sit before the fire, pretending I'm expecting her. Yes, that's what I'll do, but here she is!"

It was only Ham. His large hat was pulled down over his face.

"Where's Em'ly?' asked Mr peggotty.

Ham made a movement with his head, as if she were outside. Mr Peggotty was busily stirring the fire, when Ham said, "Mas'r Davy, will you come out a minute and see what Em'ly and me have got to show you?"

As I passed him at the door, I saw to my surprise and fright, that he was deadly pale. He pushed me into the open air, and closed the door upon us.

"Ham! what's the matter?"

"Mas'r Davy!...." Oh, for his broken heart, how he wept! I was stunned by the sight of such grief.

"Ham! For Heaven's sake, tell me, what's the matter!"

"My love, Mas'r Davy—the pride and hope of my heart—she for whom I'd have died, and for whom I'd die now—she's gone!"

"Gone!"

"Em'ly's run away! Oh, think how she's run away, when I pray my God to kill her sooner than let her come to ruin and disgrace!"

The face he turned up to the troubled sky, the agony of his figure, remain associated with the lonely beach, in my remembrance, to this hour.

"How am I ever to break it to him, Mas'r Davy?"

I saw the door move and Mr Peggotty come out. Oh, what a change had come over his face!

I remember a loud moan and cry—and the women hanging about him—and then all of us standing in the room. I had a paper in my hand.

"Read it, sir," said Ham, in a low, shivering voice.

In the midst of the silence of death, I read from the letter, blotted with tears :

"When you, who love me so much better than I ever have deserved, see this, I shall be far away. When I leave my dear home in the morning,—the letter bore the date of the previous night.

> "....it will be never to come back, unless he brings me back a lady. Oh, if you know how my heart is torn. Oh, for mercy's sake, tell Uncle that I never loved him half so dear as now. Be his comfort. Love some good girl that will be true to you. My last tears and my last thanks, for Uncle."

That was all.

Mr Peggotty stood still long after I had stopped reading. Then he said in low voice: "Who is the man? I want to know his name."

Ham glanced at me, and suddenly I felt a shock that struck me back. I sank into a chair.

"I want to know his name!" I heard once more.

"For some time past," Ham said, "there's been a servant about the place—there's been a gentleman too."

I felt Peggotty's arm round my neck, but I could not move.

"A strange carriage with horses was seen outside town, this morning—on the Norwich road," Ham went on; "the servant went to the carriage and Em'ly—was seen with him—the other was inside. He's the man."

"For the Lord's love," said Mr Peggotty, falling back and putting out his hand, "don't tell me his name is Steerforth!"

"Mas'r Davy," exclaimed Ham in a broken voice "it's no

fault of yours—but his name is Steerforth, and he's a damned villain!"

Mr Peggotty gave no cry and shed no tear. He pulled down his rough coat from a stand in a corner. Ham asked him where he was going.

"I'm going to look for my niece. I'm going to bring her back. No one can stop me!"

"No, no!" cried Mrs Gummidge, coming between them. "No, Daniel, not as you are now! Sit down for a while, Daniel. Let's talk about the time when she was an orphan, and when Ham was one too, and when I became a widow and you took me in. It'll soften your poor heart, Daniel," laying her head upon his shoulder, "and you'll bear your sorrow better."

He was quiet now. He sat down and when I heard him, my burdened heart found the same relief, and I cried too.

19 My aunt astonishes me

In the morning Mr Peggotty and his sister joined me at the inn and we went to the coach-office, where Mrs Gummidge and Ham were waiting for us.

"Mas'r Davy," Ham whispered, drawing me aside, while Mr Peggotty was putting his bag among the luggage in the coach, "his life is quite broke up. He doesn't know where he's going; he'll travel and be on the move all the time till he finds her. I'm sure you'll be a friend to him, Mas'r Davy?"

"Trust me Ham, I'll always be," said I holding his hands in both mine. Then we all took leave of one another. When we reached London, we tried to find a little lodging for Peggotty where her brother could sleep at night. Fortunately we found one over a shop, only two streets removed from my lodgings. We had dinner together that night. Mr Peggotty said that he meant "to set out" on his travels very soon.

* * *

One morning Mr Spenlow told me that Dora's birthday was in the following week and that he would be glad if I joined them on a little picnic. My heart leaped up at once and my joy knew no bounds!

When the day came I bought a bouquet for Dora, hired a grey horse and rode to Norwood. I found her sitting on a garden seat under a tree, in a white bonnet and a dress of heavenly blue. There was a young lady called Miss Julia Mills with her. I soon learnt that she was Dora's bosom friend. Jip was there and he barked at me.

"Oh thank you, Mr Copperfield!" said Dora, when I gave

her the bouquet of flowers. Then she held them up to Jip to smell and laughed when Jip growled. "I'm glad to tell you that that cross Miss Murdstone is not here. She has gone to join her brother who was a widower and who has married again."

Mr Spenlow came out of the house just then and Dora went up to him and said, "Look, Papa, what beautiful flowers!" And we all walked towards the open carriage which stood at the gate.

Oh, what a wonderful ride it was! Mr Spenlow, Miss Mills and Dora were in the carriage. I rode on horseback beside it. Dora sat with her back to the horses, facing me, and our eyes met. The sun shone, the birds sang and the south wind blew: I saw Dora in all of them.

When I woke up next morning, I made up my mind to ask Dora to marry me. But I had not enough courage, and three days passed in wretchedness. On the fourth day, I went to Miss Mill's house. Miss Mills and Dora were seated in a room upstairs with Jip. Miss Mills left me alone with Dora for a few minutes.

"I hope your poor horse was not tired, when he got home," said Dora, lifting up her beautiful eyes.

I was wondering how I could tell her I loved her.

"It was a long way for the horse," I said.

I do not know how I did it but at last I told her how I loved and worshipped her and I should die without her. Jip barked madly all the time. Well, Dora and I were seated on the sofa by and by; I was in a blissful state. Dora and I were engaged! We were to keep our engagement a secret for some time; but I wrote to Agnes about it.

As I returned home with Peggotty one evening, to my utter amazement, I found there, of all people on earth, my aunt and Mr Dick! My aunt was sitting on a quantity of luggage drinking tea and Mr Dick was leaning

thoughtfully on a kite.

"My dear Aunt!" I cried. "Why, what an unexpected pleasure!" I embraced her and shook hands with Mr Dick.

"Hello!" said my aunt to Peggotty who trembled when she saw her.

"You remember my aunt, Peggotty?" said I.

"For the love of goodness, child, don't call her by that name. She married and got rid of it. What's your name now, P?"

"Barkis, madam," said P, with a bow.

"How do you do, Barkis, I hope you are well?"

Encouraged by these gracious words, Barkis came forward and took her hand.

"Trot," said my aunt, "Why do you think I'm sitting upon this luggage tonight? Because—it's all I have. Because I'm ruined, my dear!"

If the house had come down with its roof, I could hardly have received a greater shock.

"I'm ruined, my dear Trot. All I have in the world is in this room, except the cottage."

She fell on my neck for a moment, crying that she only grieved for me, but it was only for a moment. She soon straightened herself and said, "We must meet misfortunes boldly, and not let them frighten us, Trot!"

As soon as I could recover my presence of mind, I proposed to Mr Dick to come round to Peggotty's room and take possession of the bed which her brother had lately vacated. My aunt was to have my bed.

I was to sleep in the living-room. How miserable I was when I lay down! How I thought of being poor in Mr Spenlow's eyes! My aunt was restless, too; once during the night I found her sitting near me, whispering to herself, "Poor boy!" This made me twenty times more

miserable and wretched to know how unselfishly mindful she was of me, and how selfishly mindful I was of myself.

When I was returning home from the office the following evening, I saw Agnes getting out of a carriage before our door. "Agnes!" I joyfully exclaimed as she gave me her hand. "What a pleasure it is to see you!"

Agnes had come to London to see my aunt. She was not alone, she said, her papa was with her—and Uriah Heep. "Now they're partners," said Agnes. "They have some business here; I came too, I don't like to let Papa go alone with him. There's such a change at home Trotwood, that you'd scarcely know the dear old house! They live with us now."

"Who?" said I.

"Mr Heep and his mother. He sleeps in your old room. The chief evil of their presence in the house is that I can't be as near Papa as I could wish—Uriah Heep being all the time between us—and can't watch over Papa. But if any treachery is practiced against him, Trotwood, I hope that real love and truth are stronger in the end than any evil or misfortune in the world."

We found my aunt alone. Peggotty had gone out with Mr Dick to see the soldiers at the Horse Guards. When my aunt talked about her losses, Agnes turned pale. She feared that her unhappy father might be in some way responsible for what had happened. But my aunt tried to set her at ease, saying that she had taken the money out of Wickfield's trust and invested it in some other business which proved a failure.

When Agnes learnt how miserable I was that I could not be of any help to my aunt, she drew me aside and asked me whether I would take up the duties of a secretary. Doctor Strong was in need of one and asked Mr Wickfield

Horse Guards: the Royal Horse Guards who stand on duty outside Buckingham Palace in London

if he would recommend someone. The Doctor had retired and had come to live in London. He was working on his dictionary.

"Dear Agnes!" said I. "You are ever my good Angel!"

Agnes answered with her pleasant laugh, that one good angel (meaning Dora) was enough. I wrote a letter to the Doctor offering my services as secretary. When I finished the letter there was a knock on the door and Mr Wickfield entered with Uriah Heep. Mr Wickfield's appearance was shocking. His eyes were red and there was a nervous trembling in his hand.

Uriah shook hands with me, "How do you do, Mr Copperfield? I only called to see whether there was anything we could do to help Miss Trotwood."

My aunt received him coldly.

"Uriah Heep is a great help to me," said Mr Wickfield, in a dull voice. "It's a load off my mind to have such a partner."

A few days later I received a letter from Mr Micawber saying that something at last had turned up. I went to see him at his house with Traddles. (Traddles had moved house by then.)

"You find us," said Mr Micawber, "on the brink of removing ourselves to Canterbury—in short, I'm going to work for Uriah Heep." I stared at Mr Micawber who greatly enjoyed my surprise. "Mr Heep," he continued, "is a man of great powers of mind; he isn't going to pay me much, but he has promised to free me from my debts."

20 Mr Dick tries to be useful

Doctor Strong was very pleased to see me. He was very happy at the idea of our working together at his dictionary, but seventy pounds a year was a small sum, he said. I told him it was more than twice our income. I was pretty busy now; up at five in the morning; and home at nine or ten at night. But I had great satisfaction in being so fully occupied and felt that the more I worked hard, the more I was going to deserve Dora.

Not satisfied with the job at the Doctor's, and burning with impatience to do something more, I went to see Traddles. Traddles had become a practising lawyer by now. His business had improved and he had better lodgings at Holborn. I took Mr Dick with me. Mr Dick was very sensitive to my aunt's losses. He felt he was making no contribution to the household expenses and this worried him so much that he began to lose appetite. Unless we played some innocent deception upon him and made him believe that he was useful, my aunt and I were afraid that his illness would get worse.

Traddles received us warmly. I sought his help both for me and for Mr Dick. I had heard that many men who had distinguished themselves in later life began their career by reporting the debates in Parliament to newspapers. To become a reporter, Traddles said, I should master the mystery of shorthand writing and reading. I said I would straightway buy a book on shorthand and work at it.

"Dear me," said Traddles, opening his wide-opened eyes wider, "I had no idea that you were such a determined character, Copperfield,!"

I then spoke to him about Mr Dick.

"You see," said Mr Dick sadly, "if I could do something, Mr Traddles—if I could beat a drum or blow anything!"

Traddles, who would not have smiled for the world, replied with a serious face, "But Copperfield tells me you're a very good penman, sir? Don't you think, you could copy writings, sir, if I got them for you?"

Mr Dick looked doubtfully at me and said, "Trotwood, tell him about the Memorial." I told Traddles that while Mr Dick wrote a beautiful hand with extraordinary neatness, there was the difficulty of keeping King Charles the First out of his writings.

On a table by the window we placed a legal document that Traddles got for him. On another table we spread the unfinished original of the great Memorial. Mr Dick had to copy exactly what he had before him; and whenever he felt it necessary to make the slightest reference to King Charles the First, he should go at once to the Memorial. My aunt was there to observe him. But he gradually began to devote more of his attention to the legal document and postponed the Memorial to a more convenient time.

A few weeks passed and I was qualifying myself for the job of a reporter. My aunt made little improvements in our domestic arrangements. She thought of nothing else but my comfort. For Peggotty it was a great privilege whenever my aunt asked for her help in carrying out these arrangements.

It was Saturday morning and I went to the office of Spenlow and Jorkins. When I got near the door I was surprised to see a crowd of people. I quickened my pace and went in.

"This is a dreadful thing, Mr Copperfield!" said one of the clerks.

"What is?" I exclaimed "What's the matter?"

"Mr Spenlow is dead. He drove home yesterday but when the carriage reached home, he was not in it. They found him lying on the road a mile away. He must have died in a fit and fallen down."

We looked for his will and found that he had not left one. He had nothing much to leave, in any case, and it was very surprising that for a man in legal business, his affairs were in a very disordered state. It was very difficult to make what he owed, or what he paid, or what he possessed when he died. Little by little it came out that his debts were very high.

There was a sale of the house and furniture at Norwood. I could not see Dora. She would not see anyone. Dora had two aunts, maiden sisters of Mr Spenlow, who lived at Putney; they took Dora to live with them.

Once I went to Dover to see how things were at the cottage, which had been let. I went from there to Mr Wickfield's house at Canterbury. Mr Micawber was in the office on the ground floor where Uriah used to sit in the old days.

He was very glad to see me but my visit disturbed him a little.

"How do you like the law, Mr Micawber?" I asked.

"A man with my powers of imagination finds that it deals too much with facts," he replied. He said that he was living in Heep's old house.

I asked him then whether Heep paid him well. Mr Micawber got up to see that the door was shut and spoke in a low voice, "My dear Copperfield, my financial difficulties have placed me at a disadvantage. I can say Mr Heep has paid off all my debts."

Mr Micawber began to hum a tune.

"Do you see much of Mr Wickfield?"

"No," said Mr Micawber. "He's not of much use in business."

"I think his partner makes him so," said I.

"My dear Copperfield!" returned Mr Micawber, "I'm here in a position of trust. There are some matters about which I cannot speak freely." There was a change in Mr Micawber's manner. There was something between him and me which made it difficult for us to be as friendly as we had been in the past.

I took leave of him and went upstairs to see Agnes. She asked me about Dora. I had told her of Mr Spenlow's death and how Dora in her sorrow refused even to see me. I was helpless and miserable. How could I propose marriage to Dora when she was in such a state!

"Trotwood," said Agnes, "the honourable course to take would be to write to the two ladies, her aunts."

Once again I felt Agnes to be my guide and I left for home with a lightened heart.

21 My dream comes true

On Saturday night, after my work at the Doctor's, I walked home through St Martin's Lane. I was passing by the church when I came upon the familiar face of a woman. She passed down the lane and disappeared round the corner. On the steps of the church there was the stooping figure of a man. He looked up, saw me and gave a start. I stopped in surprise and when he came down the steps, I stood face to face with Mr Peggotty! I then remembered the woman whose face had seemed familiar. It was Martha Endell to whom Emily had given money and helped to come to London.

Mr Peggotty and I shook hands. At first neither of us could speak a word.

"Mas'r Davy!" he said, "it does my heart good to see you. Well met, sir!"

"Well met, my old friend!" said I. There was a small inn close by and into this place I led him.

He sat down opposite me at the table, with his back to the door.

"I'll tell you, Mas'r Davy," he said, "where all I've been."

I rang the bell for something hot to drink.

"When she was a child," he said, "my Little Em'ly used to talk to me about the sea and about the coasts where the sea was dark blue and where the sun shone bright."

I saw the door move, and the snow drift in. I saw it move a little more and a hand softly holding it open.

"I went across to France. There I met an Englishman who was in high office. I told him I was in search of my niece.

He gave me some maps of the country and these helped me to find most of the inns in the French towns. At every inn, I waited in the yard till someone who knew English turned up and I asked him whether he had seen anyone answering my niece's description."

It was Martha's thin, haggard face at the door.

She was listening.

"People there were very helpful," continued Mr Peggotty. "Often I was given shelter and food at the cottages. When I got to Italy I wandered on. At last I got news of her; she had been seen somewhere on the Swiss mountains; someone who had known the servant (the coachman Littimer) told me that he had seen him with a young couple. I travelled night and day to reach these mountains. But when I did, it was too late. They were gone. Where they had gone I could not learn. Some said here and some said there. I travelled here and I travelled there. But I found no Em'ly and at last travelled home."

I looked up. Martha had gone from the door.

He rose and I rose too. We grasped each other by the hand again. He had found a simple lodging in a traveller's house on the Dover Road. When I returned to the inn-yard, Martha was nowhere to be seen.

* * *

I had all along been waiting for a letter from Dora's aunts at Putney. At last an answer came from them; they invited me to their house and asked me to call on a certain day. I was very excited but found no courage to go there alone. After much discussion with my aunt, I went to Putney in the company of Traddles.

The two Misses Spenlow appeared, dressed in black.

"Pray," said one of them, "be seated."

Their gentleness and quiet manner put some courage into

me: I said that I loved Dora, and that my aunt, Agnes, and Traddles all knew how sincere my love was. I also said that Dora and I were engaged to be married. Would the ladies, the aunts and guardians of Dora, give their consent to our marriage?

The two sisters listened without interrupting me. At last Miss Lavinia turning to Traddles said, "Considering how young Mr Copperfield and my niece are, it's soon to come to any decision. We'd like to get a little more acquainted with Mr Copperfield. So we'll permit Mr Copperfield to visit us."

"I shall never, dear ladies," I exclaimed, "forget your kindness!"

"We'll be happy," said Miss Clarissa, "to have Mr Copperfield to dinner every Sunday. Our hour is three."

"In the course of the week," said Miss Clarissa again, "we'll be happy to see Mr Copperfield to tea. Our hour is half-past six."

'We'd like to meet Miss Trotwood too," said Miss Lavinia.

I said that my aunt would be delighted to make their acquaintance. Miss Lavinia got up, asked me to follow her and led me to another room. There I found my Dora listening with her ears to the door.

Oh, how beautiful she looked in her black dress! She sobbed and covered her face at first. But gradually she showed how happy she was to see me.

* * *

Weeks, months, seasons passed. They seemed little more than a summer day and a winter evening. I was twenty-one. I had mastered stenography. I was making a respectable income by it. I was one of the eleven reporters reporting Parliamentary Debates for a morning newspaper. My friend Traddles was called to the bar and had

successfully come out as a barrister.

I had come out in another way too. With fear and trembling I took to authorship. I wrote a short article, in secret, and sent it to a magazine, and it was published! Since then, I had written a good many pieces and I was regularly paid for them. Altogether I was well off. We had moved to a pleasant little cottage in Highgate. My aunt (who had sold the house at Dover to good advantage) was going to move to another small cottage close at hand.

I was going to be married to Dora! Miss Lavinia and Miss Clarissa had given their consent. Miss Clarissa and my aunt went all over London, to find out articles of furniture for Dora and me to look at. Peggotty came up to make herself useful. She cleaned everything over and over again.

Let me pause upon a memorable day of my life: I get up very early in the morning and fetch my aunt. She is amazing to look at, dressed in lavender-coloured silk and has a white bonnet on. Janet has helped her to dress and she herself is in a new dress. Peggotty is ready to go to church, wanting to witness the ceremony from the gallery. Mr Dick who is going to give Dora away to me at the altar has had his hair curled. Traddles dressed in cream and blue walks beside me.

Then we come to the church door. Miss Lavinia breaks out in sobs and Miss Clarissa applies the smelling-bottle to her nose. Dora all in a tremble, holding Agnes's hand!

The rest is all a dream.

We drive away together, and I wake from the dream. I believe it at last. It is my dear, dear little wife beside me, whom I love so well!

smelling-bottle: a bottle containing smelling-salts, sharp smelling substances which are sniffed as a cure for faintness

22 Intelligence

I was all along of the opinion that Mr Micawber was doing well in his new job. I was surprised, therefore, to receive a letter from Mrs Micawber complaining of a change in Mr Micawber: He had stopped talking to his older children, he had no pride in his twins and he looked with a cold eye even on the youngest child, a baby. She did not know what to do and would I give her my advice?

I did not think I should advice a wife of Mrs Micawber's experience on such matters, but her letter set me thinking about him very much.

One evening, a year or so after my marriage, I was returning from a solitary walk, thinking of the book I was then writing. I passed Mrs Steerforth's house. I started when a woman's voice suddenly addressed me: "If you please, sir," said Mrs Steerforth's maid, "would you walk in and speak to Miss Dartle? She is in the garden."

I met Miss Dartle. She was thinner than when I had last seen her. "If you please, Mr Copperfield," said she, "has the girl been found?"

"No."

So they have heard about Steerforth and Emily, I said to myself.

"And yet she has run away from him!" she said. And Miss Dartle gave me a short account of what she knew about Emily. She had heard the story from Littimer, who had returned to London: Mr Steerforth and Miss Emily, after they left Yarmouth in the company of Littimer, travelled to France, Switzerland, and Italy. At first they were very happy, Steerforth being quite taken up by Miss Emily

and her charm. As days passed, however, he began to grow tired of the young lady and of her low spirits. He became restless again. The more restless he got, the worst she got and things did not go well from then on. At last when they were in Naples, Mr Steerforth set off by himself one morning, under the pretence of coming back in a day or two. At the end of two days he left it to his servant Littimer to break the news to her: Miss Emily's connections being common, he was not prepared to take her as his wife.

The young lady was quite beside herself with grief when the news was broken to her. She would have put an end to her life but Littimer had locked her up. She managed to escape from the room at night through a window. Her whereabouts were not known. It was believed that she had come to London. Miss Dartle also told me that she had heard that Steerforth was some-where on the Spanish coast.

Going over all that I had heard about Emily, I felt it right that I should see Mr. Peggotty. I found him at the lodging over the shop.

"Mr Peggotty," said I don't as he came towards me, "don't expect much! I've heard some news."

"Of Em'ly?"

"It gives no clue to where she is; but she's not with him."

I told him what I heard from Miss Dartle and said that Emily was likely to come to London straight. There was one person more likely to discover her than any other in the world and that was Martha Endell from Yarmouth. I had given Martha my address and his, I told him. She would go all over London looking for Emily and would report to us as soon as she discovered her. Mr Peggotty thanked me in a low voice and I went home.

One afternoon when I was standing in our garden, I noticed a figure dressed in a cloak.

"Martha!" said I, going to her.

"Can you come with me?" she asked. "I have news. Can you come directly?"

I stopped an empty coach that was coming by and we got into it. We got down and she hurried me into one of the gloomy lanes. Entering the door of a house, she signed to me to follow her up the staircase. We climbed to the topmost floor. Here we stood on the landing, and she placed a finger softly on my lips. I heard a distant foot upon the stairs. I knew. It was his! It came nearer—nearer—and rushed into the room!

"Uncle!"

A fearful cry followed the word. I stopped for a moment, and looking in, saw him supporting Emily in his arms. He gazed for a few seconds into her face, then bent to kiss it very tenderly.

"Mas'r Davy,' he said, in a low voice as I went into the room with Martha, "I thank my Heavenly Father for having guided me, in His own way, to my darling!"

* * *

The first year of our marriage had been happy. The second year seemed to promise greater happiness, but as that year wore on, Dora was not strong.

She used to spend most of her time lying on the bed or sitting in a chair.

"When I can run about again, as I used to do, Aunt," said Dora, "I'll make Jip race. He's getting quite slow and lazy."

"It's not laziness, my dear,' said my aunt, "it's age. He's getting old."

"But Jip, Little Jip? Do you think he's old?" said Dora, astonished.

"He'll last a long time, yet, Little Blossom," said my aunt

patting Dora on the cheek. "He must have a piece of flannel in his house this winter, and then he'll come out fresh again, with the flowers in the spring. Bless the little dog!"

"You're not so old, Jip, are you, that you'll leave your mistress yet?" said Dora. "We may keep one another company a little longer!"

My pretty Dora! When she came down to dinner on the following Sunday and was glad to see old Traddles, we thought she would be 'running about as she used to do,' in a few days. But they said, wait a few days more; and still she neither ran nor walked. She looked very pretty, and was merry, but the little feet that used to be so nimble when they danced round Jip, were dull and motionless.

I began carrying her downstairs every morning, and upstairs every night. But sometimes, when I took her up and felt that she was lighter in my arms, a dead blank feeling came upon me; until one night, when it was strong upon me, I sat down on my desk alone and broke down crying.

23 I am involved in a mystery

One morning by the post, I received a letter from Mr Micawber which I read with some surprise. He asked me to meet him the next day, at seven in the evening, outside the south wall of the Debtor's Prison. When I mentioned the letter to Traddles, he cried, "Really? And I've received one from Mrs Micawber!"

Mrs Micawber had said in her letter to Traddles that a change had come upon her husband. He was often angry and did not speak to anybody. His mind was weighed down with some secret suffering but what it was she could not say. She would be grateful if Traddles could solve the mystery. I now thought of Mrs Micawber's letter to me and blamed myself because I had not done anything about it. However, I now wrote a comforting letter to Mrs Micawber, and both Traddles and I signed it.

We found Mr Micawber already there. He was standing with his arms folded, leaning against a wall, but it was not with his old air. His eye-glass seemed to hang less easily and his shirt-collar drooped somewhat.

"You are in low spirits, Mr Micawber," said Traddles as he gave him his arm on one side, and I on the other.

"I am, sir," said Mr Micawber as he walked between us.

"I hope," said Traddles, "you've not taken a dislike for the law—for I am a lawyer, you know."

Mr Micawber answered not a word.

"How is our friend Heep?" I said, after a silence.

"My dear Copperfield,"returned Mr Micawber, bursting

into a state of excitement and turning pale, "if you ask after my employer as your friend, I am sorry for it. If you ask about him as my friend, I smile painfully. In whatever way you ask, my reply is this—his appearance is foxy!"

"May I ask," said I, "how my old friends Mr and Miss Wickfield are?"

"Miss Wickfield," said Mr Micawber, now turning red, "is the only starry spot in a miserable existence. And he took out his pocket-handkerchief and held it against his face.

I then mentioned that it would give me great pleasure to introduce him to my aunt. We got into a coach and reached Highgate. We went to my aunt's house rather than to mine because of Dora's illness.

"You're a very old friend of my nephew, Mr Micawber," said my aunt. "I wish I had the pleasure of seeing you before."

"Madam," returned Mr Micawber, "I wish I had the honour of knowing you at an earlier period. I was not always the wreck you now behold."

"Mr Micawber," said I, "what's the matter? Try to speak out. You're among friends."

"Among friends, sir!" repeated Mr Micawber. "Good Heavens, it's because I am among friends that my state of mind is what it is. What is the matter, gentlemen? What is not the matter; villainy is the matter; evil is the matter and the name of all these together is—HEEP!"

My aunt clapped her hands, and we all started up. I never saw a man so worked up. I tried to calm him but he got hotter and hotter, and would not hear a word.

"I'll put my hand in no man's hand," said he, gasping, puffing and sobbing, "until I have—blown to bits—the—detestable—snake—HEEP!"

I was afraid that Mr Micawber would die on the spot. I would have gone to his help but he waved me off, and

rushed out of the house, leaving us in a state of excitement and wonder. A few minutes later, he sent us a note asking us to meet him in a week's time, at Canterbury.

Early in the morning of the following day, when I was walking in the garden with my aunt, Mr Peggotty came to see me.

"I took my dear child away that night," he began, "to my lodging. She told me that Steerforth left her at Naples. She sought some good people's help and reached England, and was set ashore at Dover.

"Soon as she got to England, she turned her face to her dear home. But she was afraid she would not be forgiven, so she came to London. When my child stood upon the brink of what I dread to mention or think—Martha found her!

"Martha told Em'ly she had seen me, and knew I loved her and forgave her. Then she went in search of me, then in search of you, Mas'r Davy."

"What are your plans, Mr Peggotty?" I asked. "Have you made up your mind?"

"Quite, Mas'r Davy. There are many countries, far from here," he said with a hopeful smile. "No one will know about my Em'ly's past in Australia. We'll begin a new life over there!"

24 I assist at an explosion

Mr Micawber had asked us to meet him at Canterbury in a week's time, counting from the day he had been at my aunt's house. When the time came, my aunt was unwilling to leave Dora, who was now very ill.

"But Aunt, you must go," said Dora. "I won't speak to you if you don't and I'll make Jip bark at you all day. I won't forgive myself if you stay behind on any excuse." And so all four of us, my aunt, Mr Dick, Traddles and I went to Canterbury. We found Mr Micawber at his desk in the office. I saw the large office-ruler stuck into his waistcoat.

"How do you do, Mr Micawber?" I said in a loud voice. "Is Miss Wickfield at home?"

"Mr Wickfield is ill and is in bed, sir," he returned. "But Miss Wickfield I'm sure, will be happy to see old friends. Will you walk in, sir?" Flinging open the door of Mr Wickfield's former office he announced: "Miss Trotwood, Mr David Copperfield, Mr Thomas Traddles and Mr Dick!"

Our visit astonished Uriah. He quickly raised his thin fingers to his chin in surprise.

"This is indeed an unexpected pleasure! Mr Copperfield, I hope I see you well. Things are changed in this office, Miss Trotwood, since I was a humble clerk and held your pony," said Uriah, showing his sickliest smile.

"Micawber, tell them to let Miss Agnes know—and Mother," said Uriah setting out chairs.

"You aren't busy, Mr Heep?" said Mr Traddles.

"No, Mr Traddles," replied Uriah Heep, taking his official seat and squeezing his bony hands between his bony knees, "though Micawber and I have our hands full. Mr

Wickfield is hardly fit for any business. But it's a pleasure as well as a duty to work for him. Have you been closely connected with Mr Wickfield, Mr Traddles?"

"No, I haven't been closely connected with Mr Wickfield," returned Traddles, "or I might perhaps have come to see you long ago, Mr Heep."

Agnes now entered, followed in by Mr Micawber. Uriah watched her while she greeted us. She looked tired and seemed to have undergone great anxiety. In the meanwhile some slight sign passed between Mr Micawber and Traddles, and Traddles, unobserved except by me, went out.

"Don't wait, Micawber," said Uriah, "you may go."

Mr Micawber, with his hand upon the ruler, stood before the door.

"Micawber! Did you hear me tell you not to wait?"

"Yes!" replied Mr Micawber, still standing at the same spot.

"Then why do you wait?" said Uriah.

"Because I—in short, choose," replied Mr Micawber with a burst.

Uriah's cheeks lost colour. He looked at Mr Micawber and was breathing short and quick.

"You're a worthless fellow, as all the world knows," he said, "and I'm afraid I'll have to get rid of you. Go along!"

"If there's a scoundrel on this earth," said Mr Micawber, suddenly breaking out, "that scoundrel is —HEEP!"

Uriah fell back, as if he had been struck. Looking slowly upon us with the darkest and the wickedest expression that his face could wear, he said: "Oho! This is a plot! You've all arranged to meet here! You've bought my clerk, have you? Copperfield, take care! None of your plots against me! Miss Wickfield, if you have any love for your father,

don't join that gang. I'll ruin him if you do! I've got some of you under my power, yet. Think twice, you, Micawber, if you don't want to be crushed. Where's Mother?" he said, suddenly appearing to notice the absence of Traddles, and pulling at the bell-rope.

"Mrs Heep is here," said Traddles, returning with that worthy mother of a worthy son. "I've taken the liberty of making myself known to her."

"Who are you to make yourself known?" retorted Uriah.

"I'm the agent and friend of Mr Wickfield, sir," said Traddles in a calm, business-like way. "And I have the power of attorney from him in my pocket, to act for him in all matters."

I was surprised to learn that Mr Micawber and Traddles had met during the week and carried out some important business.

"The old ass has drunk himself into a state of foolishness," said Heep, "and it has been got from him by fraud."

"Something had been got from him by fraud, I know," returned Traddles quietly; "and so do you, Mr Heep!"

"Ury—!" Mrs Heep began, with an anxious movement of her hands.

"Mother, hold your tongue!" he returned.

Though I had known all along that his humility was false, the suddenness with which he dropped his mask and revealed his wickedness was most astonishing. His eyes passed on to Agnes and I saw the rage he felt at his power over her slipping away. I was shocked at the thought, and wondered how she could ever have lived, even for an hour, within sight of such a man.

"You don't think you'll get into trouble, Copperfield, for

power of attorney: power given to a person to act for another in business or legal matters

stealing into my house and plotting with my clerk?"

At that moment Mr Micawber, drawing the ruler from his breast and producing from his pocket a paper, began to read:

"Dear Miss Trotwood and Gentlemen—

In appearing before you to expose the villain HEEP, I asked you not to show any consideration towards me. Want, despair and near madness forced me to enter the office of the firm which went under the name of Wickfield and Heep, but the business of which was conducted by HEEP alone. HEEP and only HEEP is the mainspring of that machine. HEEP and only HEEP, is the Forger and the Cheat!"

Uriah, more blue than white at these words, made a dart at the letter, as if to tear it in pieces. But Mr Micawber caught his advancing knuckles with the ruler. The blow sounded as if it had fallen on wood.

"The devil take you!" cried Uriah, twisting in pain.

"Come near me again, you HEEP of infamy," gasped Mr Micawber, "and if your head is human, I'll break it; come on, come on!"

He then continued to read his letter:

"I was paid twenty shillings a week; the rest depended on the value of my work—on the sacrifice of my conscience, on the wrong I was able to do for Heep. He lent me money, and that put me further in his power.

"When Mr Wickfield was least fit to enter on business—HEEP was always at hand to enter on it. He got Mr Wickfield to sign important papers saying that they were unimportant. He got Mr Wickfield to allow him to draw out from the bank a large sum of money which was in Mr Wickfield's charge. He made it seem as if Mr Wickfield had done it, and has used it ever since, to force Mr Wickfield to do whatever he wanted."

"You'll have to prove this, Copperfield!" said Uriah.

"Ask—HEEP—if he ever kept a pocket-book which he had tried to burn. I found the remains of the pocket-book," said Mr Micawber.

Uriah's thin hands now stopped rubbing his chin.

"Uriah! Uriah!" cried Mrs Heep, "say how humble you are and make some arrangement with them."

"Mother, will you be quiet!" said Uriah.

Mr Micawber went on.

"Heep forced Wickfield to take him as a partner, and pretended to lend money to Mr Wickfield (this money being Mr Wickfield's own), and so got him into his power. The pocket-book will show that Heep had practised Mr Wickfield's signature. Heep made Mr Wickfield sign a paper showing that money had been lent to Mr Wickfield to save him from dishonour; but no money has ever been lent.

"I shall prove that all these things are true, and then I shall disappear from the earth on which I serve no useful purpose."

Mr Micawber finished reading from his letter and handed the paper to my aunt. Agnes was weeping quietly while Mr Dick was patting her arm.

Uriah went to the large iron safe in the room and threw it open. It was empty.

"Where are the account books?" he cried.

"I have them with me," said Traddles.

What was my astonishment when I saw my aunt make a dart at Uriah and seize him by the collar.

"Agnes," she said, "as long as I believed that Mr Wickfield had used up my money, I didn't say a word! Now that I know this fellow had taken it, I'll have it all." And my aunt began to pull at his neck-kerchief with great force. I

had to put myself between them and pacify her.

Mrs Heep went on her knees making us all kinds of promises. Her son put his mother on a chair, and standing next to her and holding her hand, he asked me: "What do you want?"

"You'll sign a paper and give everything to me—all the papers and books and all the money to the last penny," said Traddles.

"I won't do it," said Uriah.

"Then jail is the place for you," said Traddles.

"Dear me, you know quite as well as I that the law will surely punish you, though it may be a long time to right us. Copperfield, will you go and bring a couple of officers?"

Mrs Heep broke out again, begging Agnes to interfere on their behalf.

"Mother, hold your noise!" said Uriah. "Well, let me have the paper, I'll sign."

We were all very grateful to Mr Micawber and were eager to show our gratitude. Mr Dick, my aunt and I went to his house with him. As soon as we went in, Mr Micawber exclaimed, "Emma, my wife!" and rushed into Mrs Micawber's arms. Mrs Micawber gave out a cry and fainted away.

"Excuse me," said the poor lady, giving me her hand, "I'm not strong; the removal of the late misunderstanding between Mr Micawber and myself was too much for me."

"Is this all your family, ma'am?" said my aunt.

"There are no more at present," returned Mrs Micawber.

"Good gracious!" said my aunt, "I mean, are all these yours?"

"Madam, it's a true bill," said Mr Micawber. "Emma, welcome hunger and rags; our trust in each other will support us to the end!"

My aunt was thoughtful for a while and said, 'Mr Micawber, have you ever thought of going out of England—to some other land, to Australia?"

"Madam," said he, "it was the dream of my youth (I knew quite well he had never thought of it before). But there's a difficulty."

"If your difficulty is money," said my aunt, "we can give it to you. You've done us a great service, Mr Micawber!"

Mr Micawber shook his head with great force. "But if some amount can be lent," he said, "at an interest of five per cent per annum and if you could allow time for something to turn up—"

"—Can be and shall be, on your own terms," returned my aunt. "Think of this now: There are some people David knows, going out to Australia shortly. You could go on the same ship and be of help to each other."

"There's but one question," said Mr Micawber, "The climate, I hope, is healthy?"

"Finest in the world!" said my aunt.

"Madam," said Mrs Micawber, "Mr Micawber is a man of great talents. I won't say, at present, that he can expect to become a governor, but does he have a fair chance of rising there?"

"No better chance anywhere," said my aunt.

* * *

I must pause here again. All else grows dim, and fades away. I am with Dora, in our cottage. How long she has been ill!

They have stopped telling me to "wait a few days more". Will the day ever shine, when I can see my Dora running in the garden with her old friend Jip?

It is morning. Dora shows me how her pretty hair will curl upon the pillow.

"You said you thought it so beautiful," she says.

"That was the day when I told you how much in love I was," I say, playing with her hair.

"Ah!" says Dora, "when I can run about again as I used to do, let's go and see the places where we were such a silly couple, shall we?"

"Yes, we shall. So you must hurry and get well, my dear."

It is evening, and I sit by the same bed, with the same face turned towards me. We have been silent, and there is a smile upon her face. I have stopped carrying her up and down the stairs now. She lives here all day.

"David!"

"My dear Dora!"

"I want to see Agnes. I want very much indeed, to see her!"

"I'll write to her, darling, and she's sure to come at once."

"You're very lonely when you go downstairs, now?" Dora whispers, with her arm round my neck.

"How can I be otherwise, my love, when I see your empty chair?"

"My empty chair!" She clings to me for a little while, in silence.

"Then you really miss me?" she says, looking up and smiling.

"My heart, how can I not miss you?"

"Oh, I'm so glad, yet so sorry!" and she creeps closer to me.

It is night. Agnes has arrived and has been with us for a whole day. She, my aunt and I have sat with Dora since the morning, all together.

We are now alone. Do I know, now, that she will soon leave me? They have told me so, but I do not want to believe it.

"We've been very happy, my sweet Dora."

"Don't cry! Is my chair downstairs?"

"In its old place."

"Oh, how my poor boy cries! Hush! Hush! I want to speak to Agnes, quite alone. When you go downstairs, will you tell Agnes so?"

Agnes is downstairs, and I give her the message. She goes up, leaving me alone with Jip. The bright moon is high and clear. As I look on the night, my tears fall fast. I sit down by the fire.

How the time passes, I know not, until I am recalled by my wife's old companion, Jip. He is restless and looks at me and whines to go upstairs.

"Not tonight, Jip! Not tonight!"

He comes back to me, licks my hand, and lifts his dim eyes to my face.

"Oh, Jip! It may be, never again!"

He lies down at my feet, stretches himself out to sleep, and with a little cry, is dead.

"Oh, Agnes! Look, look here!"

—That face, so full of pity, and of grief, that rain of tears, that silent appeal to me, that hand upward to heaven!

"Agnes?"

It is over. Darkness comes before my eyes; for a time all things are blotted out of my remembrance.

25 The storm

I now approach an event in my life, so terrible, and which had been so deeply marked in my mind that I used to dream about it long after it had taken place.

I was making plans to go abroad and had vacated my house at Highgate, so it was to my aunt's house that Mr Peggotty came one morning. I had met Ham a few days before at Yarmouth; he had asked me to give a message to Emily that he would always love and cherish her memory; he had asked me to give his loving duty and thanks to Mr Peggotty who was more than a father to him. I had given Ham's message to Mr Peggotty by letter.

"Mas'r Davy," he said, "We're nearly ready for our voyage. Did I tell you that Mrs Gummidge is also coming with us? I've brought a letter from Em'ly. It's for Ham. She has asked for forgiveness and bid him farewell."

"I think I'll go down again to Yarmouth," I said, "and give it to him. I don't know why my mind is all the time running on Ham. I'm restless and the journey may make me feel better. Mr Peggotty, I'll go down tonight."

I took the coach down the road I had travelled so often.

"The sky is very strange today," I said to the coachman, "I've never seen anything like it before."

"That's the wind blowing from the sea, sir,' said he. "There'll be mischief done at sea before long."

The wind began to rise with a fearful sound. As night came on, the clouds closed in. The wind blew harder and our horses could hardly face it. We had to stop our coach several times, afraid that it would be turned over. Sweeping gusts of rain came up before the storm like showers of steel. When day came the wind blew even

harder. We had to fight every inch of the way and when we reached Ipswich to change horses it was very late. The storm continued.

When at last we got into Yarmouth, the people came out of their houses hardly able to hold themselves straight; they wondered that the mail-coach could come through at all on such a night. I put up at the old inn, and went down to look at the sea. On the beach I saw not only the boatmen, but half the people of the town. There were women crying because their husbands were out on the stormy sea in fishing-boats.

The sea itself was a mass of confusion. As I looked, I was blinded by flying stones and sand. High walls of water rolled in with dreadful noise and seemed as if they would swallow the town. Not finding Ham, I went to the yard where he worked. There I learned that he had gone to Lowestoft, and would be back the next morning.

I went back to the inn, and when I washed and dressed, it was five o'clock in the afternoon. I sat by the coffee-room fire, unable to rest when a waiter told me that two colliers (ships carrying coal) had gone down, with all the men in them, a few miles away. Other ships were seen fighting hard with the waves and trying hard to keep off the shore.

I could not eat, nor sit still, something within me like the storm outside, disturbed me and I began to be uneasy about Ham. I was tired now and went to my room. When I awoke it was broad day. Someone knocked at my door.

"What's the matter?" I cried.

"A wreck! close by!"

I sprung out of bed, and asked, "What wreck?"

"A ship, from Spain or Portugal. Make haste, sir, if you want to see her! She'll go to pieces any moment."

I wrapped my cloak around me and ran down the street. There were already a lot of people on the beach. The sea looked more terrible than it had yesterday. I saw nothing

but the foaming heads of great waves. A boatman standing next to me, pointed with his arm to the left. Then, O great Heaven, I saw it, close in upon us—the wreck.

One mast was broken off, six or eight feet from the deck, and lay over the side. It got caught in the ropes and sails and as the ship rolled, it was striking it as if it would cut through the side of the ship. The men on the deck cut the mast away with their axes. Among them I could clearly see one active figure with long, curly hair. But a great cry rose from the shore at this moment; the sea, sweeping over the rolling wreck, carried away men, mast, planks, everything into the boiling waters. The second mast was still standing, but the ship was breaking in the middle. There was another cry of pity from the beach. Four men came up with the wrecked ship, holding fast to the mast. Among them was the man with curly hair.

Now we could not see the ship; again she rose. Two men were gone. Men on the shore groaned and clasped their hands; women screamed and turned away their faces. No boat could be sent to the two men on the sea and no man would be so brave and rash as to think of swimming out with a rope. I heard some disturbance on the shore and when I turned I saw Ham rushing out.

I ran to stop him, and held him back with both arms. I begged him not to go. But the determination on his face and his fixed look told me that I might as well have spoken to the wind. There were others too who tried to stop him. Another cry on shore; only one man was holding on to the mast now.

"Mas'r Davy," he said, "if my time has come, it's come now. God bless you. Friends, make me ready! I'm going!"

I saw men hurry on the beach with a rope. I saw Ham standing in front with a rope tied round him.

The wreck was breaking up now, and the life of one man upon the mast hung by a thread. Still he held on to the mast. He had a red cap on—not like a sailor's cap, but of a

finer colour. We saw him wave it, and that action brought to my mind the memory of a once dear friend.

Ham dashed to the sea, and soon was rising and falling with the waves. At last he neared the wreck. In another moment he would reach the mast. Just then a high, green wall of water, moving towards the shore, came from beyond the ship and Ham seemed to leap up into it, and the mast was gone too!

They drew him to my feet—dead. He was carried to the nearest house. He had been beaten to death by the great wave, and his generous heart was stilled forever. As I sat beside the body, a fisherman, who had known me when Emily and I were children, whispered my name at the door.

"Sir, will you come out there?" he said, pointing outside.

A thought came to me. Leaning on his arm which he held out to support me, I asked him, "Has a body come ashore?"

He said, "Yes."

"Do I know it?" I asked.

He did not answer, but led me to the shore. I saw him lying with his head upon his arm, as I had often seen him at school. No need, O Steerforth, to have said, when we spoke together, in that parting hour, "Think of me at my best!" I have done that, ever.

The next day, about noon, I reached Highgate. The garden was covered with dry yellow leaves and the sun was shining bright. The house, when I came up to it, looked the same. When I rang, the maid answered the bell and led me to her mistress. Mrs Steerforth was seated in a chair and by her side was Miss Rosa Dartle. From the moment Miss Dartle's eyes rested on me, I saw she knew I was the bearer of bad news and she grew pale. Mrs Steerforth looked at me.

"I'm sorry you're in mourning, sir," said Mrs Steerforth.

"I'm unhappily a widower, madam," said I.

"You're very young to know so great a loss," she returned. "I'm sorry for it. I hope time will be good to you."

"I hope time," said I, looking at her, "will be good to all of us. Dear Mrs Steerforth we must all trust to that, in our heaviest misfortunes."

The sincerity with which I said it, and the tears in my eyes, alarmed her. I tried to control my voice in gently saying his name, but it trembled. She looked at me and said:

"My son is ill?"

"Very ill."

"Have you seen him?"

"I have."

"Are you reconciled?"

I could not say yes, I could not say no. She slightly turned her head towards the place where Rosa Dartle was standing; in that moment I said, by the motion of my lips to Rosa, "Dead."

Mrs Steerforth turned and I met her look quickly; she looked at Rosa Dartle who threw her hands up with despair and horror and covered her face.

The handsome lady—so like him, oh, so like!—turned her eyes on me with a fixed look, and put her hand to her forehead. I begged her to be calm; I should rather have begged her to weep, for she sat like a stone figure.

"Rosa!" said Mrs Steerforth, "come to me!"

Rosa came weeping. Mrs Steerforth remained statue-like without moving. Rosa kneeled down before the figure, kissing it and calling to it and began to rock it upon her bosom like a little child.

Later in the day I returned, and we laid him in his mother's room. She was just the same, they told me and Miss Dartle never left her.

26 A light shines on my way

It was a long gloomy night that gathered on us. I felt I had to go far away from scenes which were painful to me, and so I left England. I left all those dear to me, and went away. It was when I was alone I realised what weight of grief I had to bear, what suffering mine was. I mourned for my wife, taken from the world, so young. I mourned for him who might have won the love and admiration of thousands, as he had won mine long ago. I mourned for the broken heart that had found rest in the stormy sea.

For many months I travelled in Italy and Switzerland. I went through foreign towns, places, cathedrals, castles, tombs—as a dreamer would, not knowing anything, not remembering anything.

Agnes wrote to me after a few weeks. She had started a school and rented part of the house. She was happy that she was being useful and getting on well as she had hoped. That was all she wrote about herself. She gave me no advice. She only told me what her trust in me was.

At last I settled in Switzerland for some time and I began my work. I worked early and late, patiently and hard; I completed a novel and sent it to Traddles who arranged for its publication. It was widely read and talked about, and news of my growing fame began to reach me from travellers whom I chanced to meet.

I was now on my third work of fiction and when I had nearly completed it, I thought of returning home. I had regained my former health. I had been to many countries, and I felt I had improved my store of knowledge.

I landed in England on a wild autumn evening and went

straight to Holborn Court where Traddles lived. I surprised him by my sudden home-coming and was surprised in return—he was at last married to his Sophy. He was very happy to see me, happy beyond words. We had so many things to tell each other and it was very late when I wished Traddles and Sophy good night.

It was at Dover that my aunt lived now and I spent the next day in the Dover coach. I burst into her living-room where she was having tea, and was received by her, and Mr Dick and my dear old Peggotty with open arms and tears of joy.

When we were left alone my aunt and I talked far into the night.

"And when, Trot," said my aunt, patting the back of my hand, "when are you going over to Canterbury?"

"I'll get a horse and ride over tomorrow morning."

"You'll find Agnes," said my aunt, "as good and as beautiful as she has always been."

"Is she going to be married, aunt? Has she any—"

"She could have married twenty times, my dear, if she chose."

"No doubt," said I. "No doubt. But is there anyone worthy of her?"

My aunt sat thoughtfully for a while. Slowly raising her eyes to mine, she said, "I think so, Trot, but she hasn't told me."

I rode away, early in the morning, to the scene of my school days. I came into the quiet streets, where every stone was a boy's book to me. I walked to the old house and was shown into the living-room. Everything was as it used to be in those happy days.

The little door opened. Her beautiful eyes met mine as she came towards me. She stopped and I caught her in

my arms.

"Agnes! My dear girl! I've come too suddenly upon you."

"No, no! I'm so happy to see you, Trotwood!"

For a little while we were both silent. She was so good, she was so true to me that I could find no words for what I felt. We sat together and began to talk of the old days.

* * *

The year came round to Christmas-time and I had been at home for two months. I had been seeing Agnes often. One cold winter day, when I went over, Agnes was seated alone at the window in the livingroom. I sat beside her on the window-seat, and we talked about the book I was writing. She was very cheerful, and laughingly said that I should soon become too famous to be talked to. Then she noticed that I was looking at her.

"You're thoughtful today, Trotwood!"

"Agnes, I believe you have a secret," I said. "Let me share it with you." She lowered her eyes, and trembled. "My dearest girl, if you are unhappy, let me share your unhappiness."

She rose. Her eyes were full of tears and she put her hands before her face.

"Oh, please! Let me go away. If I have any secret, it is—not a new one. I can't disclose it. It must remain mine."

She was about to go away, but I stopped her. New thoughts and hopes were whirling through my mind.

"When I lost Dora, what should I have been without you? I went away, dear Agnes, loving you. I stayed away, loving you. I returned home, loving you."

She now laid her gentle hands upon my shoulders, and looked calmly in my face.

"There's something, Trotwood, I must say."

"Dearest, what?"

"I have loved you all my life!"

Oh, we were happy, we were so happy!

We were married within a fortnight. Traddles and Sophy, Doctor and Mrs Strong, besides Mr Wickfield, my aunt, Peggotty and Mr Dick were the only people at our quiet wedding. We left them full of joy and drove away together to our new house.

"Dearest husband!" said Agnes. "Now that I may call you by that name, I have one thing more to tell you. It's about the night when Dora died. She sent you for me."

"Yes."

"She told me that she left me something. Can you think what it was? She told me that she made a last request of me."

"And it was..."

"That only I would take her place."

And Agnes laid her hand upon my breast and wept, and I wept with her, though we were so happy.

Now my story ends. I look back, once more—for the last time—before I close these pages.

I see myself, with Agnes at my side, journeying along the road of life, I see our children and our friends and loved ones around us.

Here is my aunt, in strong spectacles, an old woman of eighty years and more, but upright still. Always with her, here comes Peggotty, my good old nurse, also in spectacles. She never sits down for needle-work without a bit of a wax-candle. The cheeks and arms of Peggotty, so hard and red in my childhood days, are shrivelled now; and her dark eyes are fainter; but her rough forefinger, is just the same, and when I see my youngest child catching at it as it totters from my aunt to her, I think of our living-

room at Blunderstone Rookery, when I could hardly walk. My aunt's old disappointment is set right, now. She is the godmother to a real living Betsey Trotwood.

With my two boys, this summer holiday time, I see an old man making giant kites and gazing at them in the air, with a delight for which there are no words. He greets me with many nods and winks, and says, "Trotwood, you'll be glad to hear that I shall finish the Memorial when I have nothing else to do," and then whispers, "Your aunt is the most extraordinary woman in the world, sir!"

And the Doctor, always our good friend, still working at his dictionary and happy in his home and wife.

Working at his office, wearing his lawyer's wig is my dear old Traddles. His table is covered with thick piles of papers. Sophy hopes that her husband will become a judge one of these days.

It is very late at night and these faces fade away. But one face, shining on me like a Heavenly light by which I see all other objects, is above them all.

I turn my head, and see it in all its beauty beside me.

O Agnes, O my soul, so may your face be by me when I close my life. So may I always find you near me, pointing upward!

Chapters 1-3

As you read

1. What impression do you get of Miss Betsey Trotwood? Do you think she is a nice person? Give reasons for your answer.
2. What made Miss Betsey leave in a huff?
3. Why is Peggotty angry with David's mother?
4. 'I little knew then what it was that I was leaving forever'. What is it that David leaves forever?
5. Describe Mr Peggotty's house.
6. David is afraid for Emily as she runs towards the water. Do you think David's fears forbode some harm Emily might come to? Give reasons for your answer.

Looking at language

Peggotty describes her brother 'as good as gold and as true as steel.' When two dissimilar things are compared using 'as...as' or 'like', we call it a simile.

Use each of the similies given below to make descriptive sentences that bring out the meaning of each simile.

light as a feather, quick as a flash, as cool as a cucumber, as deaf as a post, as red as a beetroot

Chapters 4-6

As you read

1. David calls Miss Murdstone a metallic lady. Describe Miss Murdstone in your own words. What impression do you form of her?
2. Relate in a few sentences how the presence of Mr Murdstone and his sister darkened the lives of David and his mother.
3. David did not understand Mr Barkis's message 'Barkis is willing.' Can you guess what it could mean?
4. We are introduced to two of David's friends at school—Tommy Traddles and Steerforth. Which of the two do you like most? Give reasons for your answer.
5. What pleasant surprise did David get one afternoon?

Looking at language

"Come *fresh up* to your lessons." Mr Creakle tells the boys.

fresh up is a phrasal verb meaning do your lessons. Here are some

more phrasal verbs ending in 'up'.

look up, take up, put up, come up, give up, end up

Now fill in the blanks with the above phrasal verbs. You may have to change the tense.

1. We started late and ..... reaching late for the show.
2. He often ..... with good ideas.
3. ..... a dictionary, if you don't know the meaning.
4. She said she was ..... a new job next week.
5. My sister and I ..... with friends while in Jaipur.
6. Hard as I try, I can't ..... chocolates.

Developing your reading

Dickens gives us a very grim picture of Mr Creakle's school. Do you think he does this with a purpose? If so, what is the purpose? Discuss this with your friends and teacher in class.

Chapters 7-9

As you read

1. What change did David notice in his mother, when he came home for the holidays? Does this prepare you for something to come?
2. Why was David not sorry to leave home?
3. In what way was David's birthday memorable?
4. What change does David see in Emily on his second visit to Yarmouth?
5. Describe in your own words, the warehouse of Murdstone and Grinby's?
6. Describe the kind of life the Micawbers led.

Looking at language

Imagine you are giving directions to an artist to draw a picture of Murdstone and Grinby's warehouse. Write a description and underline the describing words you have used. You can refer to the text.

Developing your reading

It is said that one of the strongest autobiographical elements in *David Copperfield* is David's life at Murdstone and Grinby's. How far do you think Dickens has been able to portray though David the anguish and shame he had felt, when in a similar situation. Discuss this with your friends and teacher in class.

Chapters 10-12

As you read

1. In what way did Mr Micawber's arrest influence David's decision to run away?
2. How did David lose his half-guinea?
3. What was Miss Trotwood's reaction when she saw David?
4. What was Mr Dick's advice to Miss Trotwood about what they should do with David?
5. What kind of reception did the Murdstones receive from Miss Trotwood?
6. After meeting and talking to the Murdstones, do you think Miss Trotwood felt sorry at not having taken care of David's mother, after his father's death? Give reasons for your answer, showing instances from the text.

Looking at language

The conversation between Miss Trotwood and the Murdstones was not a friendly one. Read it again silently and make a list of the words that show it was not friendly. Compare and discuss your list with the others in class.

Chapters 13-15

As you read

1. Where does David make a new beginning?
2. Why was David uncomfortable at tea with Uriah Heep and his mother?
3. Who does he suddenly meet there?
4. Why was Agnes anxious about her father?
5. Whom does David run into unexpectedly in London?
6. Why was Steerforth sad and angry with himself?

Looking at language

Read the descriptions of Salem House and Dr Strong's school. List the adjectives that are used to describe them.

Developing your reading

Uriah Heep constantly says that he is a very humble person. Do you think what he say is true or is it only a pretence?

Chapters 16-17

As you read

1. Where does David get apprenticed and what profession does he choose?
2. Describe Mr Spenlow in about two sentences?
3. How did Traddles prepare to become a barister?
4. Who are the old friends whom David meets?
5. Why do you think Steerforth tells David to think well of him? Do you feel that there might be a break-up in their friendship? Give reasons for your answer.

Looking at language

'*Holding* a candle over the stairs I lighted their way down.'

Some verbs are followed by an -ing clause like *holding* in the sentence above.

Complete these sentences in any way you like. Use -ing.

1. The sea fascinates me. I always enjoy .....
2. It was a lovely day, so she suggested .....
3. ..... her husband's hopeless state, Peggotty had written to me.
4. ..... Steerforth home, David offered him dinner.
5. It looks like rain. I don't imagine .....
6. ..... can often be quite boring.

Chapters 18-20

As you read

1. What are the two losses referred to in chapter 18? Why do you think the second one is called a 'greater' loss?
2. What did Mr Peggotty decide to do after he read Emily's letter?
3. How does David's aunt astonish him? What is his first reaction?
4. What were the changes that had taken place in Mr Wickfield's household?
5. How does Mr Dick try to be useful?
6. What was the change that had come over Mr Micawber?

Looking at language

'He *must* have died in a fit and fallen down.'

We use *must* when we feel sure something is true.

Read the situations and use the words in brackets to write sentences with *must have*.

1. The grass is damp. (it/raining)
2. The phone kept on ringing. (she/been away)
3. The child was crying. (it/hurt itself)
4. You look tired. (it/a hard day)
5. I can't find my keys. (I/left at home)
6. He is late today. (he/missed bus)

Developing your reading

It comes as a shock to David when he hears that Steerforth has run away with Emily. Do you think there are indications in the story that Steerforth might be planning this. Give reasons for your answer.

Chapters 21-24

As you read

1. To which places did Mr Peggotty go in search of his niece?
2. What did Mrs Micawber complain about in her letter to David?
3. Why had Emily wanted to end her life?
4. Why do you think Mr Micawber is in such a state of excitement?
5. What plans does Mr Peggotty have for Emily?
6. How does Mr Micawber expose Uriah Heep?

Looking at language

'That face, so full *pity*, and of *grief*...'

pity, grief are abstract nouns that show sadness. Adjectives formed form them are *piteous, grevious*. Find the adjectives for these abstract nouns.

anxiety —
fury —
hungry —
worry —
enthusiasm —

Developing your reading

What do you think Dora might have told Agnes?

Chapters 25-26

As you read

1. Describe the storm in a few sentences. Do you think the autho only refers to a physical storm?
2. Do you feel that David had forgiven Steerforth? What would yo have done in his place?
3. How did Mrs Steerforth react to the news of her son's death?
4. Why did David leave England?
5. What was Agnes's secret?
6. What was Miss Trotwood's old disappointment? How was i set right?

Looking at language

'It is very late at night...'

It is a personal pronoun but can also be used as an impersona pronoun with a form of 'be' to talk about the time, as in the abov sentence, or the day. Rewrite these sentences beginning with *it*.

1. The clock struck one when the train entered the station. It .....
2. The night was dark end windy. .....
3. The children were flying kites during the afternoon. .....
4. Today is the first of February. .....
5. They got married on the sixth of July. .....

Developing your reading

Now that you have come to the end of the book, here are som questions about what you might have felt about it.

1. How long did you take to read the book?
2. Did you find it easy/difficult?
3. Did you like to it? Mention the parts that you liked/didn't like.
4. Would you like to read another book by the same author Give reasons.
5. Would you recommend this book to anyone else?

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